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General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

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FIFTH COMMITTEE
9th meeting
held on
Thursday, 19 October 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AMARI
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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In the absence of Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua), Mr. Amari (Tunisia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 119: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued) (A/50/32, A/50/263 and Add.1, A/50/288 and A/50/404)

1. Ms. HAYLOCK (Bahamas) expressed satisfaction at the thorough way in which the Committee on Conferences had examined ways to improve further the utilization of resources and services; her country was pleased to associate itself with the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Committee's report.

2. The Bahamas shared the Committee's concern with respect to the large number of bodies whose utilization factor fell below the 80 per cent benchmark. It hoped that the discussions to be undertaken on the issue would yield positive results in the near future. As far as the control and limitation of documentation were concerned, the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had decided to replace their verbatim records with summary records. It would be highly useful for other bodies to move in a similar direction, but they should not feel compelled to take action that would impede their efficiency.

3. The comments made by the Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services with regard to the cost of producing documents and the wastage that occurred showed that both delegations and members of the Secretariat would have to exercise greater vigilance, since there were significant savings to be made. The Secretariat was to be commended on the steps it had already taken and should be encouraged to continue its efforts. She applauded the Organization's increased use of technical advances to improve the utilization of resources, as it had done in using remote translation services at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

4. Regional groups were the first to suffer when interpretation services were in short supply. Thought should be given to measures that might remedy that situation, since the work undertaken by regional groups often helped to speed up that of the formal bodies, particularly when the members of such groups were able to work in languages with which they were familiar. At the Fourth World Conference on Women a special effort had been made to provide interpretation services to the Group of 77, and it was clear that the work of the Conference had thus been greatly facilitated.

5. The Bahamas stood ready to work with all delegations to ensure that the Organization's resources were put to the best use possible and in the most rational and efficient manner possible. It could not, however, support proposals that were arbitrary, ill-defined or contrary to the interests and objectives of the Organization.

6. Mr. DEINEKO (Russian Federation) generally supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on Conferences. Russia attached great importance to enhancing the efficiency of the United Nations and therefore paid close attention to innovative steps by the Secretariat to that end, in such areas as translation and document preparation. It awaited with interest the outcome of the evaluation by both the Secretariat (including the Office of Internal Oversight Services) and Member States as to the usefulness of such measures.

7. The task involved was complex and required the efforts of both parties (Secretariat and Member States), which should agree on the strategy and tactics of conference services. Their intimate knowledge of the issue should enable them, without any outside help, to appraise the tasks and identify practical solutions, with the support of the Committee on Conferences, which was a focal point of efforts to rationalize conference servicing.

8. While paying tribute to the Committee's efforts and endorsing the Committee's general approach to the evaluation of statistics on conference services utilization, his delegation nevertheless had certain reservations to express. It was obvious that the methodology used for the evaluation of such data needed to be changed. To take just one example, while it might be true that the early closure of a meeting was an element which reduced the resources utilization ratio, that did not necessarily mean a lack of efficiency in either the work of a specific body or its servicing. That could be confirmed by the 1995 session of the Committee on Conferences itself. Statistics should therefore be treated somewhat cautiously, since they were only part of the basis for elaborating decisions on the rationalization of conference servicing.

9. That being so, the possibilities of rationalization were not unlimited and Member States for their part should demonstrate reasonable restraint in exercising their right both to hold meetings within the framework of different bodies and to acquire relevant documentation. The Russian Federation shared, in that respect, the ideas expressed by the Assistant Secretary-General during the opening discussion of the item. At the same time it insisted that any steps towards limiting documentation or rationalizing conference servicing should be of a non-discriminatory nature and should be implemented without prejudice to the principle of sovereign equality for the Organization's languages.

10. The idea that translation and interpretation consumed too much money had become more widespread. The economy measures proposed ranged from adjusting the mix of different types of employment in the translation services to the contracting out of all such work. It was indeed necessary to seek greater cost efficiency for translation, as for any other function. For example, the usefulness of technical innovations, which, frankly speaking, was not yet clearly apparent, could be analysed. More general measures - such as establishing an appropriate ratio between permanent and fixed-term contracts, improving the evaluation system and reforming the internal justice system - could also help to upgrade the level of linguistic personnel, ensure the influx of new blood and enhance staff motivation.

11. It was necessary to consider carefully all the aspects of the question and not to shoot from the hip. In no case should the quality of interpretation and translation be compromised. The issue was perhaps more political than

technical, and it was therefore inadmissible to resolve it purely on the basis of economic considerations. In a broader context, his country supported the ideas contained in a draft resolution submitted by several Member States on the subject of multilingualism, which, by allowing Member States to participate more effectively in the work of the United Nations and to understand each other better, contributed to the enhanced efficiency of the Organization. He therefore officially declared that his country had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

AGENDA ITEM 120: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/50/11 and A/49/897)

12. Mr. JU Kuilin (China) said that his delegation associated itself in principle with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Since its forty-third session the General Assembly had adopted the scales of assessments by consensus, which demonstrated that the current scale methodology reflected the principle, reaffirmed on many occasions, of the capacity to pay. There were, however, some elements in the methodology that distorted the capacity to pay, and the reasonable demands of certain Member States had yet to be satisfied.

13. How to measure the capacity to pay had been the principal bone of contention among Member States. No method was without its faults, and statistical systems varied from country to country. China had taken note of the in-depth studies by the Committee on Contributions of the various statistical methods and urged it to pursue such studies. Given that the study of any method must be carried out on the basis of technical feasibility and the availability of reliable statistical data, it was more appropriate to use statistics pertaining to national income or the gross national product.

14. Per capita income was a basic measure of the capacity to pay. China therefore opposed abolishing the low per capita income adjustment. At the same time, it did not favour expanding the margin of the allowance.

15. Exchange rates had a direct bearing on any determination of capacity to pay. There again, sufficient and reliable data had to be available. It was therefore premature at the moment to use the purchasing power parity (PPP) estimates.

16. Foreign debt repayment and servicing cut heavily into the resources of many developing countries, holding back their development and reducing their capacity to pay. Some sort of relief should continue to be granted to the heavily indebted developing countries, and the Committee on Contributions should continue to search for a reasonable method.

17. The existence of the floor rate had penalized a number of developing countries. The problem had become more acute in recent years as a result of the increase in the regular budget and the peace-keeping budgets. The situation needed remedying as soon as possible, but care should be taken to ensure that the lowering or elimination of the floor rate did not increase the burden on these developing countries to which the floor rate did not apply.

18. The calculations done by the Committee on Contributions demonstrated that an adjustment of the base period would not have much impact on the majority of Member States. China believed that a longer base period was a factor for stability. It hoped that once the base period was set at either three or six years, it would be kept relatively constant.

19. China had full confidence in the Committee on Contributions, with its unequalled expertise and experience. Its role in improving the scale methodology must be reaffirmed, and it must be encouraged to continue its work in that area.

20. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) said that his delegation fully shared the views expressed by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was deeply concerned that the scale of assessments had become one of the most contentious issues before the General Assembly and regretted that the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the financial situation of the Organization had failed to propose concrete measures.

21. Although the scale adopted by the General Assembly for the period 1995-1997 did not fully meet the expectations of all Member States, Indonesia considered it to be a reasonable one because it took into account the essential points set out in resolution 48/223.

22. Indonesia continued to believe that, in accordance with Article 17 of the Charter, the expenses of the Organization should be borne by the Member States as apportioned by the General Assembly, and that capacity to pay must remain the fundamental criterion for apportionment. National income was the best indicator of capacity to pay, and a country's assessment should reflect income fluctuations.

23. Market exchange rates should continue to be applied for the purpose of conversion. Where necessary, price adjusted rates of exchange (PAREs) could also come into play. On the other hand, purchasing power parity (PPP) estimates should not be used, for the reasons given by the Ad Hoc Working Group in paragraph 94 of its report (A/49/897).

24. The debt-servicing burden was a major drain on the resources of developing countries and its devastating impact had been aggravated by fluctuating currency rates, rising interest rates and inflation. Those countries which had continued to meet their debt obligations punctually despite such difficulties deserved special attention. The debt burden adjustment must, together with the low per capita income adjustment, remain in effect.

25. The scale methodology had to be improved gradually - obviating the "clean slate" approach, which would not achieve its purposes.

26. With regard to the scale of assessments for peace-keeping operations, his delegation wished simply for the moment to reaffirm the importance of the principles set out by the General Assembly in resolutions 1871 (S-IV) and 3101 (XXVIII).

27. Mrs. RODRIGUEZ (Cuba) said that she fully supported the statement made by the delegation of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Opinions were divided on an ideal scale methodology. And it was therefore understandable that the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay had not been able to make more specific recommendations and that the Committee on Contributions had required two sessions to complete the study requested of it by the General Assembly in resolution 48/223 C.

28. The scale adopted for the period 1995-1997 was not subject to a general revision because the conditions established in rule 160 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly did not obtain.

29. Capacity to pay must remain the cornerstone of the scale methodology, and the Committee on Contributions must, during its next session, deal once and for all with the whole range of points raised by the General Assembly in separate resolutions, in particular those referred to in paragraph 3 of resolution 43/223 B.

30. Among the many accommodations to the principle of capacity to pay which had been agreed to over the years, at times for political reasons, those prompted by a recognition of the limited resources of the developing countries must be maintained. On the other hand, a distorting factor like the ceiling rate must be eliminated. There was in fact no justification for having the developing countries bear a portion of the financial burden that should fall to the main contributor, especially when, despite such an undue advantage, the main contributor had decided unilaterally not to pay and even to reduce its contributions. As planned, further thought must be given to the ways of applying the floor rate; and, to the extent that the two limits - floor and ceiling - were a source of distortions, their justification must be reconsidered.

31. The special scale applied in the financing of peace-keeping operations must continue to be governed by the principles set out in General Assembly resolutions 1874 (S-IV) and 3103 (XXVIII). Member States had approved that scale for several years in succession and the time seemed to have come to institutionalize it.

32. Her delegation did not see how improving the scale methodology could in any way remedy the Organization's financial situation. The only remedy for the budget deficit was for all Member States to pay their contribution on time, in full, and unconditionally.

33. Mr. AITMATOV (Kyrgyzstan) said that improvement of the methodology for establishing the scale of assessments was one of the best ways to resolve the financial crisis the Organization was currently experiencing. No one would disagree that Member States had an obligation to pay assessments in full and on time, however, the basic principle of capacity to pay must also be taken into account. Arrears owed by the former Soviet republics, including Kyrgyzstan, had accrued because those assessments were far too high. The Committee on Contributions had indicated in its report that the assessment rate of Kyrgyzstan was three times higher than it would have been without the scheme of limits. For that reason in spite of the fact that it had recently paid $600,000 of its

arrears to the regular budget, as of 1 January 1996, Kyrgyzstan might possibly find itself in the situation provided for in article 19 of the Charter. The problems that that would create, both for the United Nations and for Kyrgyzstan, were caused by factors beyond that country's control.

34. The transition to a market economy had proved to be much longer and more complex than expected, as illustrated by data published by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In 1994, gross domestic product had fallen by 27 per cent compared with 1993, and by 67 per cent compared with 1991. All sectors of the economy had been affected and unemployment had increased. According to a survey conducted in 1993, almost 40 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line and the situation had continued to decline, due to high inflation and a steady drop in real incomes. At the end of 1994, incomes were less than a quarter of what they had been at the end of 1990.

35. Trade with the former Soviet republics, Kyrgyzstan's principal partners, had continued to shrink. Debt servicing represented an enormous burden; Kyrgyzstan owed the equivalent of $170 million to countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and was due to repay a credit of $28 million to the European Union in 1995.

36. The budget deficit was considerable in size and Kyrgyzstan was having enormous difficulties raising the necessary funds to ensure even the basic maintenance of its infrastructures. All of those factors meant that its capacity to pay was diminishing. He hoped that the current situation would be taken into account when the modalities of application of Article 19 of the Charter were reviewed.

37. Mr. DIMOV (Bulgaria) said that, owing to certain imperfect elements in the current-scale methodology, many Member States, including Bulgaria, had been overassessed in the scale for the years 1995 to 1997. The application of the principle of capacity to pay should be coupled with criteria of fairness, objectivity and coherence. His delegation shared the view expressed by the countries of the European Community that the scale methodology should be stable and based on reliable, transparent and comparable data which reflected reality to the highest possible extent, and that it should be adopted by consensus.

38. In order for there to be better correlation between assessed contribution and current capacity to pay, the statistical base period should be reduced to three years, as recommended by the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay. As suggested in paragraph 77 of the Working Group's report, the scale of assessment should be recalculated annually for information purposes.

39. The residual effects of the scheme of limits should be phased out during the next scale period. As recommended, the use of the Gross National Product as an income measure should be kept under review, in so far as that aggregate met the criteria of comparability, simplicity and availability. In that regard, his delegation endorsed the recommendation regarding the former centrally planned economies (para. 51), as well as the recommendation regarding the use of market exchange rates for converting data. Finally, his delegation supported the view expressed by some members of the Committee on Contributions who favoured maintaining the debt-burden adjustment.

40. His delegation expressed concern with regard to the precarious financial situation of the Organization which was primarily the result of the failure of Member States to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions. The only possible justification for late payment was force majeure.

41. Mr. BAUMANIS (Latvia) mentioned two goals to pursue which, he believed would serve the basic interests of all Member States. The first was to put the United Nations on a sound financial basis and the second was to complete the reform of the scale of assessments for the regular budget by adopting an essentially permanent methodology that would be subject to infrequent reviews, combined with more frequent periodic reviews of the data used to determine the assessments. His delegation supported General Assembly resolutions that sought to promote those two goals; the second goal could help to achieve the first.

42. It seemed a propitious time to begin serious reform, for several reasons. First of all, the concurrence of the financial crisis of the United Nations and its fiftieth anniversary was stimulating political minds and focusing political will during the debate in the General Assembly a number of countries, including Latvia, had advocated innovative solutions for financing international activities; that should improve the climate for achieving financial reforms, including the reform of the scale methodology. Finally, the report of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay (A/49/897) contained several improved and new elements for a sound technical basis and had identified additional elements that needed to be investigated.

43. While it was true that the methodology for calculating assessments required further technical improvements, the general principles to guide its determination were already there. The principle of capacity to pay should be made the basis for the scale methodology, without exception but its use should be guided by the following additional principles: the principle of sovereign equality, which required that the same method be used for all Members when determining the capacity to pay; the principle of progressivity or vertical equity which required that rich members pay a larger share of their income than poorer members, the principle of horizontal equity, which required that Members with equal per capita incomes pay the same share; and the principle of moderate adjustments applied to national income, which served as a basis for calculating assessments.

44. The efforts aimed at putting the United Nations on a sound financial basis should be based on recognition of a number of shared interests. Removing existing distortions in the scale of assessments was in the interest of all Member States as it would improve the democratic functioning of the Organization by increasing or expanding participation in the work of the General Assembly. That participation could be strengthened by removing the current floor rate which would drastically shorten the list of countries having lost the right to vote in the General Assembly in accordance with Article 19 of the Charter. The participation of some countries that were suffering distortions owing to the scheme of limits, particularly new Member States, including Latvia, was currently threatened. Improving the financial situation of the United Nations would also bring about savings for all Member States. A financially sound United Nations could more effectively carry out its two major responsibilities under the Charter, namely promotion of development and maintenance of

international peace and security. Lastly, ensuring that the Organization was financially sound, and that the scale of assessments was equitable would be politically beneficial for all Member States.

45. In conclusion, he again drew attention to the situation of new Member States, including Latvia, which were threatened with the loss of the right to vote beginning in 1996. Those States had been overassessed by the General Assembly in 1992; the situation had improved somewhat since 1994. Latvia's assessment in 1994 had been more than three times higher than the assessment based on the capacity to pay principle; in 1997 its assessment would be only double the assessment based on that principle. His Government was making every effort to discharge its obligation to pay its assessments in full, on time and without conditions, in keeping with the principle of sovereign equality. It also recognized that its financial obligations had been unaffected by the fact that a second aspect of that principle, namely the equal rights of all Member States, had not been respected when its assessment had been calculated in 1992. Nevertheless, a situation which was beyond its control had led to the arrears which now threatened to trigger the application of Article 19 beginning January 1996. Consequently, his delegation regretted to announce that it would have to seek a decision by the General Assembly allowing it to spread out repayment of its arrears over an extended period of time.

46. Mr. ORANGE (Belarus) expressed satisfaction with the important and generally fruitful work done by the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay and noted that the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the Organization had made some progress in its work. Nevertheless, all those involved in the complex process of formulating the financial policy of the Organization were aware of the seriousness of the financial situation of the Organization, on the eve of the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary. His delegation was concerned about the crisis, but was also disappointed because there were so many differences of opinion among Member States regarding the nature and the causes of the financial crisis. His delegation wished to stress that the main reason Member States were so seriously indebted to the Organization was that the methodology used in establishing the scale of assessments was not a fair one. There was also the question of the efficiency of the administrative and financial operations of the United Nations which should be taken into account. Thirdly, before taking any political decisions that had significant financial implications, an objective assessment should be made of the possibility of raising the funds needed to implement them.

47. It was well known that the assessments of certain countries were much higher than their capacity to pay. Some of them, unfortunately, were least developed countries (LDCs), which found themselves in that situation because of the application of the floor rate. The Republic of Belarus was, itself, in a very difficult position. Relatively simple calculations showed that, out of a total of US$ 60 million, the amount his country owed to the United Nations, only US$ 10 million had been calculated according to the principle of capacity to pay. Part of that debt - US$ 1.8 million - had been settled during the current year. The substantial difference led to a unique situation: while no one disputed the fact that the treatment applied to Belarus was unfair, nothing was being done to correct the anomaly. Other countries were in a comparable situation. Thus, Member States did not have confidence in the way the United

Nations was financed. In theory, the solution appeared to be quite simple: assessments should be brought into line with capacity to pay, the problem of indebtedness caused by the factors he had just mentioned should be resolved and Member States should be persuaded to pay their obligations in full and on time. In practice, it was very difficult to attain those objectives, particularly since they required real political will on the part of Member States.

48. It was evident from the work of the bodies he had mentioned that it would be a long time before any concrete decision was taken about improving the system for sharing the expenses of the Organization. Although he did not wish to be pessimistic, he had the impression that the reform process had only just begun, and that it would be a long time before the system for financing the Organization was completely reformed. There was also reason to doubt whether one of the measures adopted for the current reform, namely, the comprehensive review of the scale methodology, would in fact solve the financial crisis. In the view of his delegation, an effort should also be made to seek solutions to the problems of Member States, as a separate matter, particularly at the present stage. Such measures, considered in the context of a reform that would be completed in due course, would eliminate the most serious points of tension. Unfortunately, not many initiatives appeared to be directed towards that end. On the contrary, it would appear from the report of the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the Organization that there was, instead, a tendency to consider harsher approaches, even punitive measures, in dealing with States that did not scrupulously meet their financial obligations. It was important to bear in mind the situation of those countries to which the principle of capacity to pay had not been duly applied. Unless something was done about that, it would be unreasonable, to say the least, to adopt the same approach with regard to those countries. Moreover, that could lead to an aggravation of the crisis and its consequences.

49. His delegation had noted with interest the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on Contributions, but felt that the findings did not live up to Member States' expectations. His delegation would have been in favour of proposals aimed at reducing the base period to three years, using Gross National Product and market exchange rates and eliminating, in so far as possible, the element which introduced the most serious distortions in the scale, namely, the scheme of limits. At the same time, no conclusions had been reached on some important elements of the scale, such as debt-burden adjustment and low per capita income adjustment. When it came time to determine the scale for the next period (1998-2000), that would certainly create additional difficulties.

50. Mrs. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Kazakstan) said that the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary provided Member States with an opportunity to join efforts to help the Organization adapt to the new challenges and the new duties it faced as a result of the changes that had taken place since the end of the cold war. In that regard, Kazakstan shared the serious concern expressed by other Member States and by the Secretary-General with regard to the financial crisis of the United Nations, and felt that constructive reform measures must be taken. She noted with satisfaction the work that had been done by the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the Organization.

51. She expressed concern at the many arrears that had accrued in the payment of contributions, both for the regular budget and for peace-keeping operations.

It went without saying that all countries should scrupulously meet their obligations. The Republic of Kazakstan had spared no effort to meet it own obligations. Its transition from a centrally planned to a market economy, which had entailed far-reaching changes, and the difficulties it was facing because of certain ecological problems which had complicated the overall process of social and economic reform, had not deterred it from its firm determination to contribute to the financing of the Organization's activities. On the eve of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, Kazakstan had paid a total of US$ 2.5 million to the regular budget and peace-keeping operations, and her country intended to take other concrete steps to settle the amounts it still owed.

52. With regard to the improvement of the scale methodology, which must be simple and flexible and which must take into account the economic development of States, her delegation felt that the latest report of the Committee on Contributions represented a step in the right direction. She noted with satisfaction that the Committee was carrying out its work in accordance with the mandate contained in General Assembly resolution 48/223. She also supported the work of the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations which, inter alia, was concerned with conducting a more thorough study of the capacity to pay principle and she had taken note of the views and contributions on the subject contained in the report of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay. Her delegation endorsed the idea of bringing the scale of assessments more into line with the principle of capacity to pay, with a view to finding a long-term solution to the current financial crisis That applied, in particular, to the case of the excessively high assessments required of those Member States, including Kazakstan, which had formerly been part of the Soviet Union.

53. Bearing in mind the need to establish a transparent scale based on clear economic criteria, Kazakstan was in favour of shortening the statistical base period to three years, which would better reflect real capacity to pay. The scheme of limits was another element that had helped to substantially increase her country's assessed contribution. In that regard, she said that although her delegation had joined the consensus on the question at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, she was in favour of phasing out the scheme of limits as soon as possible. Moreover, she was in favour of using official market exchange rates for purposes of converting national income figures into United States dollars.

54. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that the High-Level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the Organization would present constructive proposals based on recommendations that had already been made by the Committee on Contributions and the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay, as well as on any proposals that might be made in the course of the debate in the Fifth Committee.

The meeting rose at 1.50 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

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FIFTH COMMITTEE
10th meeting
held on
Friday, 20 October 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABELIAN (Armenia)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

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In the absence of Mr. Asher (Nicaragua), Mr. Abelian (Armenia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 120: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (A/50/11 and A/49/897)

1. Mr. HO (Singapore) supported the statement by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He reaffirmed that the capacity to pay of Member States, itself determined on the basis of national income, was the fundamental criterion for determining the scale of assessments. However, as national income statistics were influenced in the short term by a whole series of internal and external factors, a base period of two to three years would not provide a true picture of capacity to pay and it would therefore be preferable to opt for a longer period.

2. Adjustments for countries with low per capita income unduly affected the calculation of contributions, especially since per capita income did not really affect capacity to pay and its use discriminated against countries with small populations. Moreover, the gradient of 85 per cent used in the adjustment formula was not based on any objective or technical criterion. The current methodology should therefore be modified with a view to reducing the weight of per capita income in the establishment of the scale.

3. Almost one quarter of Member States were assessed at the floor rate of 0.01 per cent although their share of global income was far less than that figure. That anomaly should be corrected by lowering the floor rate, a step that could be facilitated by using more than two decimal points in quantifying the scale of assessments. The floor rate should not, however, be abolished since it was incumbent on all Member States to bear at least a small fraction of the Organization's expenses, thereby showing their political commitment.

4. Singapore supported the phase-out of the scheme of limits but stressed that it should be gradual to prevent sudden excessive increases in the contributions of certain Member States.

5. The Organization was patently on the brink of bankruptcy, but its financial problems were not related to the scale of assessments: they were due to the fact that certain Member States had failed to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and unconditionally and owed the Organization, inter alia, $800 million in respect of the regular budget. The solution to the crisis lay not so much in a reform of the scale as in the exercise of political will by Member States through payment of their assessed contributions.

6. Mr. ELMONTASER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) supported the views expressed by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Since the founding of the United Nations, the scale of assessments had always been a thorny issue. The Committee on Contributions had spared no effort to devise an equitable methodology that would take account of States' capacity to

pay, a fundamental criterion for the establishment of the scale. It was to be hoped that its work would lead to the elimination of all sources of distortion.

7. His delegation welcomed the Committee's decision to consider the matter of the ceiling rate and hoped that it would produce a recommendation designed to remove or at least alleviate the burden on developing countries. In addition, a shorter base period that took account of short-term economic fluctuations should be adopted. With regard to the scheme of limits, his delegation welcomed the reduction of 50 per cent in its impact and hoped that it would be rapidly phased out.

8. Mr. TURNQUEST (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community, expressed appreciation of the statement by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Capacity to pay had always been the basic criterion for determining the scale of assessments, and it was gratifying that both of the working groups concerned had reaffirmed the principle in the course of their in-depth examination of possible improvements to the system.

9. Although the existence of anomalies in the current scale was generally recognized, it had been adopted by consensus, and Member States must respect the ensuing obligations until such time as agreement on acceptable changes had been reached. The Organization's financial difficulties could not be attributed to shortcomings in the scale of assessments, and it was moreover unlikely that Member States would be more inclined to pay their contributions if the scale were changed. At all events, non-payment of contributions was unacceptable unless a country was facing serious difficulties, in which case the Organization should show understanding of its plight. In spite of their own economic problems, the member countries of the Caribbean Community had always endeavoured to pay their contributions to the regular budget and the budget for peace-keeping operations in full and on time, and they urged all other Member States to follow suit.

10. In order to guarantee an equitable scale, it was important for the scale methodology to be simple, transparent, and based on reliable, verifiable and comparable data. In that regard, many of the delegations of the Caribbean Community had difficulty in providing the data required by the Organization; they hoped to obtain the necessary assistance in the future. They had taken note of the various views expressed on the use of gross national product (GNP) instead of national income in calculations, the need to maintain the debt-burden and low per capita income adjustments, and the optimum base period to ensure stability of the scale. Continued discussion was clearly necessary before a decision could be taken.

11. The information contained in the reports of the Committee on Contributions and the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations showed unequivocally the difficulties experienced by many developing countries, including the majority of CARICOM countries, due to the imposition of the floor rate which resulted in contributions well beyond their capacity to pay. The floor rate must therefore be lowered or abolished. In addition, it was to be hoped that the Committee on Contributions could examine the possibility, mentioned in Barbados in 1994, of drawing up a vulnerability index covering the small island developing States.

12. Per capita GNP should not be used as a criterion for determining income, since it did not reflect States' capacity to pay and would only accentuate the disadvantages which many countries already experienced. Caution was all the more imperative given that the decision on the scale of assessments for the regular budget would affect the apportionment of the expenses incurred in connection with peace-keeping operations, and even the scales of other international organizations which took the United Nations scale as a guide. The CARICOM delegation shared the view of the Group of 77 and China that any change in the scale of assessment for peace-keeping operations should be made on the basis of consensus.

13. Mr. MONAYAIR (Kuwait) said that the financial crisis must be resolved urgently so as to enable the Organization to discharge its functions effectively. For that to be achieved, it was more important than ever that Member States should pay their contributions promptly and in full. Otherwise, any modification of the existing method for determining the scale of assessments would have only a limited impact. Kuwait, for its part, paid its financial obligations fully and promptly.

14. The principle of capacity to pay remained the fundamental criterion in determining the scale of assessments. The Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay had rapidly produced a constructive report containing recommendations formulated after detailed consideration of the various factors affecting countries' capacity to pay, with the aim of arriving at a more accurate and equitable method of determining contributions. The recommendations on reducing the reference period from 7 1/2 to 3 years and using gross national product as the basis of the calculations were particularly noteworthy.

15. His delegation supported the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, which was of great importance in that it outlined the position of the developing countries on the various criteria used to determine the scale of assessments and on the relevant principles laid down by the General Assembly.

16. It was essential, above all, to avoid reductions in the contributions of industrialized countries giving rise to increases in the contributions of developing countries, and factors such as development requirements must be taken into account, particularly in respect of countries with economies presenting specific characteristics.

17. His delegation was aware of the difficulties faced by the Committee on Contributions in carrying out the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly in resolution 48/223 C, and hoped that the Committee would redoubie its efforts to improve the method currently used and would have sufficient time to study and take advantage of all the constructive recommendations contained in the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group.

18. Mr. BIRENBAUM (United States) said that his delegation was among those in favour of revising the scales of assessments for the regular budget and for peace-keeping operations: although that would not resolve the Organization's financial difficulties, it would create a fairer and more transparent system.

19. In its report, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay had provided very persuasive justifications for its proposals, in particular on using GNP to determine States' income, reducing the reference period to three years and recalculating assessments annually. It was unfortunate that the Committee on Contributions had not been able to give the report detailed consideration.

20. Serious consideration must be given to replacing market exchange rates which created anomalies with alternative types of conversion rates, such as those based on purchasing power parity. In addition, if debt burden adjustment was retained, actual debt repayments should be taken into account, rather than following the current practice of using the theoretical payment period of eight years as a base. The low per capita income adjustment could be revised with a view to re-establishing the balance between the States that received a subsidy and those which paid for it. The reduction of the floor rate could be justified, but assessed contributions should be reduced only on the basis of specific economic criteria. The scheme of limits should be phased out as quickly as possible.

21. With regard to the scale of assessments for peace-keeping operations, his delegation commended the Government of Portugal for deciding voluntarily to move from group C to group B. Nevertheless, the scale needed comprehensive reform, for the differences between the groups were too great and there were no objective criteria for assignment to one group or another. In addition, ceiling and floor rates should be introduced for the permanent members of the Security Council. The many discussions of the whole subject which had taken place should be continued with a view to reaching early agreement.

22. It had to be borne in mind that the scale of assessments reflected both technical and political considerations. Discussions should continue in an effort to reach a conclusion that was acceptable in both respects.

23. Mr. HAMZAH (Iraq) said that, if the financial crisis faced by the Organization was to be resolved, Member States must begin by paying their contributions on time. He associated himself with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and stressed the need to take into consideration the financial and economic situation of the developing countries in the determination of their assessed contributions. In that connection, he reiterated that the increase in Iraq's rate was unjustified since it ignored the country's economic situation and the adverse consequences of the complete embargo imposed on it by the Security Council, since that embargo had deprived it of any source of income and rendered it unable to respond to the humanitarian and vital needs of the population.

24. Iraq had proposed that the amount of $300,000 should be released from the country's frozen assets to enable it to pay part of its debt to the regular budget, or that the United Nations should accept payment in local currency, as it had done until 1992. As neither of those proposals had been accepted, his delegation had submitted a request to the Committee on Contributions for derogation from the provisions of Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations on the grounds that Iraq's failure to meet its financial obligations had been due to circumstances beyond its control. In its report (A/50/11), the

Committee on Contributions had stated that members had divergent views on the matter. Consequently, his delegation had requested the President of the General Assembly to place the matter on the Assembly's agenda. Since the President had forwarded the matter to the Fifth Committee for its consideration under agenda item 120, his delegation hoped that the Committee would take a decision on it as soon as possible.

25. Mr. MIRMOHAMMAD (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He stressed that the principle of capacity to pay remained the fundamental criterion for determining the scale of assessments, as had repeatedly been stated by the General Assembly. It was essential to improve the current methodology for determining the scale of assessments in order to ensure that the scale reflected more accurately the real capacity to pay of Member States, whose level of development varied greatly. In that regard, national income or per capita income should not be taken as the sole criterion; other elements should also be taken into account, such as natural or man-made disasters and the problems of refugee host countries, as well as debt adjustment and the low per capita income allowance formula.

26. Iran's assessment had been far in excess of its capacity to pay for the four latest scale periods. Even with the 50 per cent phase-out of the scheme of limits, its assessment rate was twice as high as it would have been with a complete phase-out. His delegation therefore favoured the total phase-out of the scheme of limits. In addition, in view of the structural adjustments under way in many countries, it also favoured a shorter base period, preferably three years, since the use of more recent data would more accurately reflect real capacity to pay.

27. His delegation was concerned about the seriousness of the financial situation of the Organization and stressed that, as long as the major contributors remained unwilling to meet their financial obligations under the Charter, no improvement to the scale of assessments would be sufficient to resolve the crisis.

28. Mr. AL-AMRI (Oman) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He appealed to all Member States which had not yet done so, to pay their contributions, since that would be the first step towards resolving the grave financial crisis faced by the Organization.

29. Recalling that Oman's assessed contribution had been reviewed in the scale adopted by the General Assembly in 1994 for the period 1995-1997, his delegation reiterated its opposition to any increase in the assessment of developing countries which failed to take into consideration their economic situation. It noted that in paragraph 33 of its report (A/49/897), the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay had drawn attention to the situation of the oil-producing countries, whose national wealth had been significantly reduced by the 1986 drop in oil prices, which had significantly reduced their capacity to pay.

30. He hoped that a simplified method for determining assessments would be adopted, which would be flexible, fairer and more transparent, based on the principle of capacity to pay. He also hoped that the economic problems experienced by his country, which had always endeavoured to pay its contributions in full and on time, would be taken into consideration when its assessment was being determined.

31. Mrs. WILLIAMS-STEWART (Samoa) said that the scale of assessments was an issue of great importance to small countries such as her own. She believed that the scale methodology contained elements which distorted the fundamental principle of capacity to pay. In practice, many countries, including her own, had been required to pay contributions far in excess of their capacity to pay. In addition, the existence of the floor rate meant that the smallest and poorest countries were assessed at a rate proportionately much higher than that of wealthier countries. Those anomalies had been recognized in the report of the Committee on Contributions and had been examined by the High-level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the Organization. It was clear that the floor rate should be eliminated or considerably lowered and that the special scale for the financing of peace-keeping operations should be adjusted accordingly. That would enable a number of small independent countries to join the Organization, thereby consolidating its universal character. It was also worth nothing that many of the countries which were in substantial arrears owing to economic factors beyond their control and which fell or would fall under Article 19 of the Charter were floor countries.

32. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, it was more important than ever for all Member States to meet their financial obligations and place the Organization on a sound financial footing. Notwithstanding its own difficulties, Samoa was up to date with its contributions to the regular budget and would endeavour to remain so at all times.

33. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He stressed the need to reach a consensus on a fair and equitable apportionment of the expenses of the Organization and reiterated that the real capacity of Member States to pay was the fundamental criterion for determining a scale which would be acceptable to all and would help to strengthen the financial basis of the Organization and of the United Nations system.

34. If national income remained the basis for assessing capacity to pay, realistic exchange rates should be factored into its consideration. In addition, debt-burden adjustments should be based on a larger coefficient, which would better reflect the impact of debt on the capacity to pay of countries which, like Algeria, spent most of their export revenues on debt servicing. His delegation supported the recommendation by the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay that the statistical base period should be shortened to three years; that would make it possible to take into account more recent data and more accurately reflect the capacity to pay of Member States.

35. He reaffirmed his country's full support for the United Nations, which was also manifested at the financial level. Despite its own diminished capacity to pay, Algeria had met all its financial obligations ahead of time.

36. Mr. ETUKET (Chairman of the Committee on Contributions), responding to observations made by delegations during the general debate, said that several Member States had reaffirmed that capacity to pay constituted the fundamental criterion for determining the scale of assessments. Member States had also emphasized the importance of fulfilling the financial obligations incurred under the Charter. One delegation had recalled that the scale of assessments was the resultant of a range of political and technical considerations: it was thus to be hoped that Member States would be able to provide the Committee on Contributions with clear political guidelines on the basis of which it could give a technical opinion regarding the scale methodology.

37. Certain issues clearly required further consideration, namely the length of the base period, the debt-burden adjustment and the low per capita income adjustment. Further, there was a convergence of views regarding the possibility of using market exchange rates for the conversion of national income statistics, the need to study adjustments to be applied in special cases, and the taking into account where appropriate of other indicators of income to measure capacity to pay.

38. With regard to the phasing-out of the scheme of limits, he noted the concerns expressed by certain Member States on the impact that the scheme had on their assessment and stressed that attention would need to be given to the matter as soon as possible in the context of the new scale methodology. At its next session the Committee was planning to consider, inter alia, the problems raised by the former centrally planned economies - referred to in paragraph 51 of the report of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Working Group on the Implementation of the Principle of Capacity to Pay (A/49/897) - and the question of the abolition of or reduction in the floor.

39. The Committee on Contributions shared the concerns of those countries which, owing to economic difficulties beyond their control, had fallen or were likely to fall within the scope of Article 19 of the Charter. It would make every effort to respond quickly, pursuant to its mandate, to requests for derogations submitted to it, taking into account the recent supplementary data provided by certain Member States.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/50/6/Rev.1 (Vols. I and II), A/50/7 and A/50/16)

40. Mrs. ALBRIGHT (United States of America) noted with satisfaction the timeliness and improved format of the budget submission, which also reflected many positive aspects in substantive terms. The proposed budget provided for a net reduction of 109 posts and shifted resources towards the priority areas of political and peace-keeping activities, development, human rights, humanitarian assistance and internal oversight. Moreover the proposed programme budget reflected a number of valuable initiatives instituted by the Secretary-General in the management of personnel, modernization of information systems, administration of justice, strategic budgeting and control of administrative

costs. The establishment of a new efficiency board was also an encouraging sign.

41. Her delegation believed that the Secretariat had taken creditable steps towards the goals specified by the Secretary-General of maximizing efficiency gains without having a negative impact on the fulfilment of mandates. It was now the responsibility of Member States to reshape the budget where necessary and to approve a funding plan that would be sustainable over the following two years as well as over the longer term, taking into account new world realities.

42. A start must be made in addressing the multiplicity of agencies and programmes with overlapping mandates that had come to exist over the years by pruning obsolete entities and activities. For the United Nations to succeed, its organization must be rationalized around core roles, those which the United Nations was uniquely able to play. The question that must constantly be asked in the Fifth Committee in its consideration of the budget was how a particular agency or activity contributed to a core purpose of the United Nations. That required a departure from business as usual and the adoption of a zero-based approach to budgeting, placing the burden of proof on the advocates of continuing or expanded programmes rather than on those advocating termination or downsizing.

43. There were many ways of rationalizing the day-to-day functioning of the Administration, and the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management had already made progress in that regard. Progress must continue in eliminating non-essential spending and unneeded positions through greater use of outsourcing and simplified administrative procedures. That was, of course, the responsibility of managers, but Member States must, in considering the budget, give a clear mandate for reform.

44. Firstly, operating costs must be reduced. Tens of millions of dollars could be saved over the biennium if the ratio of General Service staff to Professional staff was reduced to the average prevailing in the specialized agencies. The current ratio was wasteful in the light of current technology.

45. Secondly, spending must be eliminated on activities that were duplicative or which had become obsolete. For example, the Department for Development Support and Management Services, with a budget of more than $25 million, overlapped the work of other agencies and should be consolidated with them. A hard look should also be taken at whether the Special Committee on decolonization still had important business to conduct; and the various committees dealing with Palestinian issues should be re-examined in view of the peace process.

46. Certain activities included in the proposed programme budget were not justifiable at a time of fiscal constraint. Spending for discretionary and cosmetic maintenance and renovation should be curtailed, and resources for travel, general temporary assistance and consultants should be rationalized. Furthermore, reductions in the budget for conference services could be achieved by holding fewer and shorter meetings. The size and cost of the Department of Public Information could be scaled back considerably without harm to the essential mandates of the Organization. Savings could also be achieved by

reducing the flood of paperwork produced by the Organization every year. The United States would be inviting all Members to support a resolution outlining principles for reducing the number and size of reports. There should be a significant reduction in the amount spent on reports, estimated at $295 million in the current biennium.

47. Finally, it was not the time to increase staff salaries. Her Government would oppose the 9 per cent pay increase proposed by the International Civil Service Commission, which was not justified on the merits and could not be absorbed in the budget without compromising important programmes.

48. A further fundamental question in considering the budget concerned the will and ability of Member States to pay for United Nations activities. Many Member Governments, including that of the United States, were behind in payments to the regular budget which merited some explanation. The United States Government had asked Congress to appropriate $923 million to meet United States assessments to international organizations, including the United Nations. Although the issue had not yet been settled, lower amounts had been approved in the House of Representatives and the Senate (by $70 million and $370 million, respectively) than requested. The request for $672 million to pay off arrears for peace-keeping had been denied. It should be recalled that the United States Constitution did not allow the executive to engage in expenditure without the agreement of the legislature, where the President might not enjoy a majority. The Government was strongly committed to meeting United States obligations towards the United Nations, and would continue its dialogue with members of Congress towards that end. It had recently made payments of $150 million to the Organization, and it should be recalled that in total it had paid over $1 billion over the past year.

49. Despite efforts to control escalating costs, there had been strong growth in assessments. Over the past decade, even though budgets had been maintained at or near zero real growth, the United States regular budget assessment had grown by more than 80 per cent. That could not continue and it was clear that Congress would not support levels of funding for the United Nations that did not reflect budgetary self-discipline. In any event the United States would not approve a budget package which exceeded $2.51 billion for the biennium 1996-1997, an amount which corresponded to a reduction of only 3.8 per cent compared with the current biennium and which could certainly be achieved without harm to essential United Nations mandates.

50. It was true, as other delegations had pointed out, that budget-cutting and reform were not the same thing. That was why her delegation hoped that the Member States would consider its suggestions objectively and with the sole purpose of making the United Nations more efficient and cost-effective.

51. Reform must be the first priority of the General Assembly in 1995. A number of measures could be taken: an increase in outsourcing, greater transparency in the work of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, the strengthening of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and the establishment of a code of conduct for the staff. For the long term, a dialogue was under way on how to revitalize the United Nations. The General Assembly had established a high-level working group on reform, and a

number of recent studies had produced useful recommendations that should be reviewed and, when appropriate, implemented as soon as possible. The goal should be to build a United Nations system that was more productive for all its Members, especially those countries which aspired to expand their economies and whose needs were specific and very concrete. That was why the United States wanted a United Nations that talked less and produced more.

52. Mrs. des ILES (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the 13 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which were Members of the United Nations, welcomed the timely distribution of the budget documents and fully associated herself with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She welcomed the improvements in the format and methodology of the budget, especially the participation of programme managers.

53. The Secretary-General had launched a three-phase review of the activities of the United Nations, of which phase one (enhancing efficiency and improving performance) had already been incorporated into the proposed programme budget. While welcoming those improvements, the CARICOM delegations attached the greatest importance to the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, contained in its report (A/50/7), that it was incumbent upon the Secretary-General to make the necessary programmatic proposals to the General Assembly should he be of the view that certain activities should be abandoned or modified, or that priorities should be reordered so as to achieve the desired level of savings. They also trusted that future reporting on the subject would be sufficiently detailed to justify that the measures envisaged would indeed lead to improved productivity and would cover the entire Organization.

54. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 was approximately 3.8 per cent less than the revised appropriations for the biennium 1994-1995, and the Advisory Committee's recommended reduction of only $18 million would suggest that the budget estimates presented by the Secretary-General were realistic and cost-effective. There was, however, a need for caution in that cost-cutting and rationalization measures must strengthen the efficiency of the United Nations system, not paralyse it.

55. The CARICOM countries attached particular importance to the ongoing discussions in the Ad Hoc Working Group on an Agenda for Development, through which the commitments undertaken at the recent series of global conferences organized by the United Nations system could be implemented. They were not, however, convinced that the overall level of resources for international development - which had been reduced by 4 per cent in the proposed programme budget - was adequate to provide for the implementation of the agreed outcomes. In that regard, they reiterated the need to restore the balance between peace-keeping operations and development activities; in their view, the first step was to begin increasing regular budgetary allocations for development activities. The imbalance was also evident in the increase in the resources allocated to the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Whatever the importance of its function, it was disturbing, to say the least, that that unit should be provided with 18 per cent of the new Professional posts and 60 per cent of the new General Services posts, at a time when resources for development were being

reduced. Enhancement of internal oversight should not come at the expense of activities mandated by the deliberative bodies.

56. Finally, it was absolutely essential to resolve as soon as possible the unprecedented financial crisis facing the Organization. If Member States were not willing to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time, or to find a way to resolve the overall financial situation of the United Nations, the eventual adoption of a programme budget would be a meaningless exercise.

57. Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) said he was convinced that no amount of administrative reform or restructuring of the Secretariat would enable the United Nations to respond to the new era that was opening up. The new political and socio-economic challenges required the formulation of a new international consensus inspired by the ideals and objectives of the Charter. The current emphasis on peace-keeping and humanitarian assistance should not divert attention from established priorities such as economic development, economic revitalization programmes in Africa, environmental protection, and control of narcotic drugs. It was therefore particularly disappointing to note that attempts had been made in the proposed programme budget to reduce the ability of the United Nations to respond to the needs of the majority of its membership. The growing marginalization of developing countries in world affairs, particularly in the global economy, could give rise to opposition, or even confrontation, between North and South. In order to avoid that possibility it was essential to strengthen the role of the United Nations and it was against that background that the General Assembly should approach the budget proposal. Reform was not a bad thing in itself, as long as it did not become perpetual and was not based on a "minimalist" conception of the Organization.

58. It was totally unfair on the part of some Member States to blame the Secretariat for failures which were not its own. Outstanding contributions amounted to $3.4 billion, and the United Nations owed $1.1 billion to troop-contributing countries; in such conditions, it was not surprising that the Organization was not fulfilling its mandates. Egypt believed that it was perfectly meaningless to consider the proposed programme budget without an unconditional commitment on the part of all Member States, particularly those which were withholding payments for political reasons, to pay their arrears in full by the end of the year.

59. His delegation fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was disturbing to note that the level of the proposed budget for the biennium 1996-1997 was not only below that for the biennium 1994-1995 but also below that of the budget outline which had recently been approved. Moreover, an arbitrary decision that the Secretariat must find some way to absorb all additional expenditure resulting from inflation and currency fluctuations would be contrary to accepted procedures and to the provisions of resolution 41/213 which the General Assembly had adopted, it must be stressed, by consensus.

60. Egypt noted with concern that the areas of particular interest to developing countries had been lumped together under one budget cluster, despite the numerous activities mandated by the legislative organs resulting mainly from the follow-up to major international conferences in the social and economic

fields. On the other hand, internal oversight had been presented as a priority, although it was neither a substantive activity nor a priority agreed to by the General Assembly. In Egypt's view, it was an important but not priority function - particularly with regard to the allocation of new posts.

61. He also noted with concern the decrease in real terms in the resources allocated to Africa. At a time when tremendous efforts were being made at the regional and subregional levels to overcome the problems with which the continent was faced, the role of the United Nations should be enhanced, particularly in the fields of social and economic development, rather than limited to humanitarian assistance.

62. The Egyptian delegation had been unable to get a clear picture of the Secretariat's structure from its review of the proposed programme budget. The Secretary-General should provide the Fifth Committee with the organization chart proposed for each department, together with a definition of the tasks entrusted to each administrative unit - as well as a list of staff by nationality at the senior level in each department. That was the best way of ensuring adherence to the principle of equitable geographical representation at that level.

63. The Egyptian delegation had taken note of the efforts aimed at streamlining structures and avoiding duplication and waste. In that connection, it welcomed the comments and recommendations made in the first report of the Advisory Committee, while emphasizing that measures to achieve savings must not be arbitrary and that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate body for taking decisions on the budget.

64. Mr. MIRMOHAMMED (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It noted that the difference between the reduced resources allocated in the proposed programme budget and the revised 1994-1995 appropriations was partly the result of savings of $35.5 million which were achieved through greater productivity. While such savings were commendable in principle, they should not be made at the expense of development activities (UNCTAD, regional commissions), which were important to many Member States. The United Nations must be given the resources to fully implement the activities entrusted to it by Member States and the implementation of programmes should not suffer from the failure of the major contributor to comply with its obligations.

65. It was to be expected that the priorities envisaged in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997 would be reflected in the proposed programme budget. Unfortunately, the expected balance had not been realized. Even though, from the earliest years of the Organization's existence, the General Assembly had insisted on the importance of economic development programmes to the strengthening of international peace and security, such programmes continued to be given less favourable treatment than those accorded higher priority by others. The priorities proposed by the Secretary-General were not the same as those agreed to by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth and forty-seventh sessions, particularly with regard to internal oversight: as the Chairman of the Group of 77 had stated, oversight was not a substantive activity and the General Assembly had never declared it a priority.

66. More generally, he had noted an increase in the proposed programme budget for programmes which had not been approved by the General Assembly, such as in the area of human rights, where the increase was unjustified, particularly since revisions to programme 35 of the medium-term plan had not been approved. Section 21 of the proposed programme budget could be adopted only if it reflected the relevant legislative mandates.

67. As for the question of the transfer of posts within particular sections of the budget, the Iranian delegation did not think that it would be in a position to approve the transfer of the 26 posts from the support account for peace-keeping operations to the regular budget.

68. Mr. ELMONTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) welcomed the fact that the programme budget had been submitted early enough to permit Member States to study it in sufficient depth. The Libyan delegation supported the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. As other speakers had already pointed out, the reduction of the budget was not an end in itself but a means of better determining priorities and objectives; in any case, he hoped that it would not affect development programmes.

69. While the budget's presentation and methodology had undoubtedly improved, the size of the budget document could be reduced still further; efforts must also be made to rationalize expenses, determine disbursement priorities and avoid overlapping competences and the issuance of similar documents, and maximum use must be made of the technological innovations which had been introduced into the work of the Organization at relatively high cost. Such measures would lead to, inter alia, a reduction in the number of staff, limitation of temporary appointments and of the use of consultants, and strict control of extrabudgetary revenues and expenses and the use of the contingency fund.

70. It was deeply regrettable that the delays in the payment of assessed contributions should jeopardize the Organization's financial situation. It was particularly unacceptable for certain Member States, which were quite capable of paying, to use non-payment of their assessed contributions as a means of pressure. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, for its part, had paid its assessed contribution up to the end of the current year, despite the difficult economic circumstances it was suffering; those difficulties, as everyone knew, had been considerably worsened by the consequences of the embargo and unjust sanctions imposed by the Security Council. It again called for the immediate lifting of the sanctions.

71. The Libyan delegation was of the view that the adoption of the proposed programme budget should be deferred until Member States committed themselves to the payment of their arrears and assessed contributions to the end of 1995, so that the proposed budget for the following biennium could start with a clean slate. In conclusion, his delegation supported most of the remarks contained in the Advisory Committee's report on the proposed programme budget.

72. Ms. AGUILERA de LATERZA (Paraguay) said that, at a time when the range of tasks being entrusted to the Organization was becoming increasingly broad and diversified, delays in the payment of assessed contributions were frustrating

its actions. While it was understandable that certain States in difficult economic straits might have difficulty in honouring their commitments, it was unacceptable that economically strong States should be poor payers. Paraguay was pleased to announce that it was currently up to date in the payment of its assessed contributions.

73. The proposed programme budget provided for certain funds which should have been used to finance development projects to be redeployed on a priority basis to peace-keeping operations. Paraguay did not think that it was appropriate to give preference to peace-keeping operations to the detriment of development activities, which were of critical importance to most Member States. There were also clear imbalances between regions. The share of Latin American countries in the allocation of programme resources, for example, was only 8.66 per cent, as against 50.42 per cent or 40.67 per cent for other regions.

74. It was true that the likelihood of an increase in international cooperation for development had been announced for the following biennium, to be funded from an allocation of additional resources to the economic and social sectors. But, given the current donor fatigue, the provenance of such resources was unclear, unless perhaps they were obtained through a more rational and effective use of the Organization's resources. In that connection, he could not but welcome the adoption of such measures as the establishment of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. However, as the Group of 77 had rightly recalled, the General Assembly, through the Fifth Committee, remained the appropriate decision-making body on administrative and budgetary matters.

75. In the area of human resources, the proposed programme budget provided for a reduction of 201 posts, which would eventually result in a net reduction of 109 posts. It was to be hoped that the principle of equitable geographical distribution would be rigorously applied in making the reduction, a requirement of particular importance for Paraguay, which was one of three Latin American countries that were underrepresented in the Secretariat, with only one staff member compared with its desirable range of between 2 and 14. In addition, Paraguay deeply regretted that, notwithstanding its efforts, the participation of two human rights observers of Paraguayan nationality in the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) had not been accepted.

76. Lastly, the Paraguayan delegation was concerned about the proposed abolition of two posts in the Language and Communications Training Section which would affect Spanish language courses. Such a measure, as well as undermining the effectiveness of Spanish language teaching at the United Nations, would manifestly violate the principle of parity of official languages.

77. Mr. AKPLOGAN (Benin) observed with satisfaction that the proposed programme budget had been submitted within the prescribed time-limits. While noting that improvements had been made, the Beninese delegation - which supported the statement by the Group of 77 - was concerned that the amount of proposed resources was less than that of the revised appropriations for 1994-1995 and also than the overall programme budget plan. The reduction in resources for development was particularly worrying since it could not fail to have an impact

on priority areas of programme action such as the economic recovery and development of Africa, which for the first time had its own section; the amount of resources assigned to that section should be revised upwards. Benin, which belonged to the group of least developed countries, also requested that adequate resources should be allocated to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and to the other United Nations institutions involved in follow-up to the Mid-Term Global Review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. It was furthermore essential to earmark adequate resources for follow-up to all major United Nations conferences.

78. Post reductions (109 posts proposed for abolition in the 1996-1997 biennium) should not become the main focus of the current restructuring process. To operate effectively, the Organization should have essential human and financial resources at its disposal. Benin, notwithstanding its difficulties, had fully paid up its contributions to the regular budget and was in the process of clearing its arrears of payments in respect of peace-keeping operations. It urged all Member States, especially the largest contributors, to pay their contributions in full, on time and unconditionally, so that the Organization could meet the expectations of the international community.

79. In conclusion, the Beninese delegation expressed its readiness to collaborate with all other delegations in reaching a consensus on the proposed budget.

80. Mr. BORDA (Colombia) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The discussions could not fail to benefit from the new budget presentation, which was a marked improvement on previous budget documents. It was essential to keep to the same course, making the first part of the proposed budget still more descriptive and detailed and focusing on analytical and practical aspects in the second part.

81. As noted by the Chairman of the Group of 77, the proposed programme budget should be based on the set of priorities established in the medium-term plan, which stemmed directly from the mandates given to the Organization by Member States. But it was precisely the lack of correspondence between those two elements that had prevented the Fifth Committee from reaching a consensus at the previous session on certain modifications of the medium-term plan that neglected matters of vital importance to the developing countries. It was to be hoped that the situation would be remedied as a result of the debate on the proposed budget.

82. The pursuit of greater effectiveness and efficiency should not be reduced to the curtailment of resources. Change, which must not be dictated by the interests of just a few Member States, should seek to enhance the Organization's ability to discharge all the mandates entrusted to it.

83. The Colombian delegation was aware of the difficulties presented by the apportionment of the Organization's necessarily limited resources. In that connection, it was not convinced that grouping together in a single part of the budget the sections on such diverse subjects as economic development, the environment, international drug control and economic recovery in Africa was

conducive to efficiency. It was more vital than ever to reaffirm the role of the United Nations in economic and social affairs. But the token increase in proposed resources for development activities and - still worse - the reduction in resources for bodies engaged in such activities seemed to indicate a trend towards the gradual dismantling of the entities that played a key role in that area in the Secretariat. Economic and social progress - the cornerstone of global peace and security - must rank again as one of the Organization's priorities if the goals laid down in the Charter were to be attained.

84. Subject to the foregoing observations, the Colombian delegation was ready to approve a proposed budget that genuinely reflected the will of all Member States.

85. Mr. CONNOR (Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management) reviewed the Organization's financial situation. He announced that a detailed up-to-date report would shortly be available. Since the end of September, additional contributions to the regular budget had been paid: they amounted to $135 million, including $95 million from the main contributor. Those contributions, however welcome, had been expected and had therefore been taken into account in the cash-flow estimates for the last quarter of 1995. As a result, although the amount of unpaid contributions had declined to some $675 million, it would still be necessary to borrow about $240 million from the budgets for peace-keeping operations by the end of the year to bridge the expected gap in the regular budget. Only the payment of further contributions, over and above those still expected, or additional economy measures would avert the need for increased "borrowing".

86. Additional payments for peace-keeping operations amounting to $228 million had been received in October, reducing the amount of unpaid contributions to some $2,291 million. In addition to the payments announced on 12 October (Russian Federation, $61 million; United States, $26 million; Brazil, $12 million), they included, in particular, two payments by the Russian Federation ($12 million and $25 million respectively) and a payment of $56 million by the United States.

87. In view of those payments, the Secretary-General intended very shortly to reimburse a sum of $100 million to troop-contributing countries in addition to the reimbursement of $150 million previously announced. However, even after those reimbursements, the Organization would still owe troop-contributing countries some $800 million by the end of October or about $1 billion by the end of the year. It would also have to borrow $240 million from the budgets for peace-keeping operations to meet cash requirements. The financial situation of the United Nations therefore remained extremely critical.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
11th meeting
held on
Friday, 27 October 1995
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/50/6 (vols. I and II), A/50/7 and A/50/16)

1. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Secretary-General had formulated his programme budget proposals for the biennium 1996-1997 on a minimum requirements basis, trying to do more with less. As a result, the proposed estimates fell below the level of the outline and that of the current appropriation for the biennium 1994-1995. Although the proposed programme budget was cost-effective, the level of resources proposed was sufficient for the efficient implementation of mandated activities. Any additional mandates would, however, require additional resources.

2. With regard to priorities and the medium-term plan, he noted that the Secretary-General's budgetary proposals were formulated to respond to programmatic requirements, as mandated by Member States. The basis for the programmatic aspects of the budget was the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, its revisions, and subsequent resolutions of legislative bodies. In formulating budget proposals for the biennium 1996-1997, the programme structure and content had followed the revisions, to the medium-term plan as approved by the Committee for Programme Coordination (CPC). In cases where CPC could not agree on the proposed revisions, the Secretariat had formulated the budget on the basis of the structure approved earlier by the General Assembly.

3. The programme of work was consistent with the priorities identified by the General Assembly and reflected general trends of a broad sectoral nature. He assured Member States that the priorities proposed for the 1996-1997 budget in no way diminished the priorities that had been established by the General Assembly when it had adopted the medium-term plan for 1992-1997. As was clear from the foreword to the budget, the Secretary-General had focused on three programme areas: strengthening the Organization's capacity to deal with political and peace-keeping activities, reinforcing international cooperation for development, and enhancing support for human rights and humanitarian activities. In addition, efforts had been made to increase the Organization's capacity for internal oversight functions.

4. The net decreases in resources for the economic and social areas which had been noted by some representatives represented significant one-time expenditures approved in 1994-1995 for the major global conferences that had taken place during the current biennium. The Secretary-General's proposal included measures to strengthen programmes dealing with areas such as sustainable development, micro-economic and social policy analysis, drug control and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. He also wished to draw the attention of Member States to the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General for the follow-up to the Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the World Summit for Social Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders. The Secretariat would in due course submit the Secretary-General's proposals

regarding follow-up to the Platform of Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women.

5. With regard to what some representatives had described as the bloated bureaucracy of the United Nations Secretariat, he said that under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, the Secretary-General was proposing a net reduction of 109 posts from the current biennium to a total of 10,006 established posts. For purposes of comparison, he pointed out that that was close to the number of established posts 20 years earlier, and that 10 years earlier, there had been 1,400 more. During the past two decades, however, the scope and volume of the United Nations activities had expanded significantly and 40 new Member States had joined the Organization, the General Assembly had established numerous intergovernmental and treaty bodies for which the Secretariat was required to provide substantive and conference services, while the number of meetings and reports had increased dramatically. The Secretariat had made a determined effort to redeploy staff and resources from low to high priority areas and to reduce administrative costs in favour of substantive areas. Priority areas such as those dealing with economic, social and humanitarian matters, had received an increase in staff from 3,714 to 4,052 in 20 years. The increased number of meetings was serviced by almost the same number of conference-servicing staff, 20 years earlier the Secretariat had had 2,191 such staff and the Secretary-General was proposing 2,112 for the biennium 1996-1997. Since the end of the cold war, in particular, the demands and expectations placed on the Organization had increased significantly and the Secretariat was determined to cope with the situation with renewed dedication. Through the budgetary process for 1996-1997, the Secretariat had made serious efforts to identify areas where it could manage with fewer staff, by abolishing 201 posts, while responding to high priority programmes and functions with a minimal addition of 66 posts.

6. The question of a proper ratio of General Service to Professional staff required a more careful analysis, given the variety of functions performed by the General Service staff and the nature of the activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system. An important feature of the United Nations regular budget was that it covered activities undertaken at many duty stations, which required the deployment of field service and local staff totalling nearly 2,000. Another feature was the provision of conference services, which required more than 1,000 conference-related General Service staff. Other General Service staff at Headquarters performed indispensable specialized work; because of the nature of their work, many of them provided services for the whole Secretariat. It should be noted that the majority of General Service staff were not secretarial staff. The Secretary-General was keenly aware of the need to limit the number of secretarial posts by taking full advantage of technical innovations. The proposals for 1996-1997 included a reduction of 151 General Service posts; there was no additional request for such posts.

7. With regard to further efficiency, after extensive analysis and rigorous scrutiny, the Secretary-General had proposed the rationalization of work programmes, technological improvements, the simplification of work procedures, and reductions in external printing, the travel of staff, consultancies, equipment and general operating expenses. The Secretary-General would conduct a

broader review to determine where there was duplication or overlapping of activities, or where activities had lost their relevance and would present recommendations to the General Assembly for appropriate decisions.

8. On the issue of recosting, he noted that, in accordance with the procedures established under General Assembly resolutions 41/213 and 49/217, the programme budget for every biennium was recosted on three occasions: towards the end of the session of the General Assembly when the proposed programme budget was to be approved, at the end of the first year of the biennium in the context of the performance report, and when the General Assembly considered the second performance report. The recosting was based on the latest operational rates of exchange and the latest information regarding rates of inflation and adjustments to standard costs.

9. Recosting did not necessarily mean additional resources to cover currency or inflation changes upwards. Depending on the strength of the dollar vis-à-vis other currencies used for United Nations operations, and on inflation, it could lead either to additional costs or to reductions. In recent years, recosting had resulted in a reduction of currency adjustment in the initial appropriations as compared with proposed programme budgets for the previous three bienniums when the dollar had been stronger. The Secretary-General had prepared his proposals for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213. The final figure of recosting for the initial appropriations must await the latest currency and inflation data for December 1995. It was, however, expected that the continuing weakening of the dollar against the Swiss and Austrian currencies was likely to result in a considerable increase.

10. A conference room paper containing organizational charts showing the administrative structures would soon be issued, as would the staff list of the Secretariat.

11. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that Member States should be given a parallel picture of the impact of the post reductions on every section of the budget. The Secretariat should indicate how it was going to address the issue of follow-up action regarding global conferences such as the Fourth World Conference on Women and the International Conference on Population and Development, which had been held after the budget had been prepared. Specific information should also be provided on the transfer of resources between departments, especially on the nature of such transfers and their programmatic impact on various activities, including the impact on sending and receiving departments. The legislative authority for such transfers should also be provided. Specific information was required on the role of extrabudgetary resources, bearing in mind the priority areas. The Secretariat should explain the use and operation of the contingency fund. New guidelines might perhaps be required in that regard.

12. Mr. AMARI (Tunisia) said he agreed that there should be greater efficiency, increased cost-effectiveness, greater accountability and that the Organization's work should be streamlined. The Controller's comments should, however, have been limited to a comparison of the programme budgets for the bienniums 1994-1995 and 1996-1997. He welcomed the fact that the Committee would have organizational charts before it. The Secretariat should indicate the

legislative mandates for the transfer of resources, as such information was crucial to a proper consideration of the programme budget.

13. Mrs. ARAGON (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that they would carefully review the budget proposals when the Committee started its consideration section by section. The organizational charts to be submitted to the Committee should be accompanied by a definition of the tasks entrusted to each unit of the Secretariat with appropriate justifications.

14. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Secretariat would provide additional information on the programmatic impact of the proposed post reductions and transfers as the Committee discussed the budget. It had been possible to reflect in the budget some of the follow-up measures to the global conferences, especially the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development. A separate report would be submitted on the most recent conferences. The Secretariat would submit an organizational chart which would provide a graphic presentation of the structure of every office and department. The functions of each unit could not, however, be presented in the same format. Such information would be found in the budget document.

AGENDA ITEM 158: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/49/6, A/49/16, A/49/99 and Add.1, A/49/135 and Add.1, A/49/301 and A/49/958; A/50/16; A/C.5/49/27 and Add.1 and A/C.5/49/28 and Add.1; E/1994/4, E/1994/19 and E/1995/21)

15. Mr. TOYA (Japan) welcomed the Secretariat's proposal for a prototype of a new format for the medium-term plan which would ensure a linkage between the programmatic and organizational structures of the Secretariat. Referring to the Secretary-General's proposal that, beginning in 1998, the new medium-term plan should cover a four-year period, he said that his delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that a four-year cycle would be too short, given the Committee's interest in making the plan truly forward-looking and strategic. It was, however, flexible on that point. The related regulations and rules would have to be revised in due course, based upon the proposal of the Secretary-General and the decision of the General Assembly.

16. According to the proposed schedule for the preparation and review of the next medium-term plan, the Advisory Committee and CPC would review the proposed medium-term plan in May and June 1996. The General Assembly should approve the new format as soon as possible and request the Secretariat to submit a proposal so that the Committee could start deliberations on priority areas. The plan would then be submitted to the General Assembly for approval in a timely manner. Given the severe financial difficulties facing the Organization, the allocation of its limited resources among the various programmes should be discussed thoroughly and carefully. His delegation believed that the new format would facilitate such a discussion and thereby help to make the Organization more efficient and effective.

17. Mrs. RODRÍGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that the General Assembly had been unable to take substantive decisions on programme planning at its forty-ninth session owing to the violation of existing legislative mandates, the selective interpretation of some mandates, the non-submission of proposed revisions to the

medium-term plan to relevant intergovernmental organizations and the failure to provide appropriate technical advice to those bodies concerning their role in the planning process, as laid down in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. Some Member States had also demonstrably lacked the political will to respect existing General Assembly resolutions.

18. In view of the legislative vacuum regarding proposed revisions to the medium-term plan, the adoption of some sections of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 would be possible only on condition that existing legislative mandates were reflected. In the view of her delegation, if the budget to be adopted for that biennium were to fall within the framework established by General Assembly resolution 41/213, it would be inappropriate to transpose the discussions that had taken place on that topic to the budget negotiations. A concerted effort was therefore needed to find a solution under the agenda item currently before the Committee that would satisfy the interests of each and every Member State.

19. As noted by the Secretary-General in paragraph 2 of his report on the prototype of a new format for the medium-term plan (A/49/301), the usefulness of the plan as currently conceived had been increasingly called into question both within the Secretariat and among Member States. The General Assembly had reiterated its request to the Secretary-General for a more user-friendly format in resolution 48/218. Although there was general agreement on the new structure proposed by the Secretariat, her delegation felt the need for more information and details on certain aspects of the proposal, in particular the aim of the perspective document. As noted by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 5 of its report (A/49/958), it was not clear from the Secretary-General's document how "broad priority areas" for the work of the Organization would be determined or what was meant by "pressing needs of an unforeseeable nature". An active exchange of views between the Secretariat and the Member States should accompany the preparation of the perspective document, which should analyse both persistent problems and new trends, maintaining a proper balance between the two.

20. The proposal for a programme framework required further development. The structure of the plan was based on legislative mandates and the integrity of the programmes with all their components should be preserved in whatever proposal was adopted. Regulation 3.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation stipulated that the medium-term plan was to be presented by programme and objective and not by organizational unit.

21. According to paragraph 12 of the Secretary-General's report, there would be a consolidation of subprogrammes under the new format leading to a reduction in their number. Her delegation trusted that existing legislative mandates would be fully respected in that process and that the Secretariat would bear in mind the need to preserve subprogrammes in respect of which a General Assembly mandate existed.

22. As noted by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 9 of its report, the Secretariat should explain the rationale for the consolidation of subprogrammes and the criteria for dividing certain programmes among organizational units.

23. Her delegation wished to be informed of the proposed Secretariat timetable for the preparation and consideration of the medium-term plan once the prototype had been approved.

24. Lastly, her delegation reiterated its support for the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the second part of its thirty-fourth session (A/49/16, Part II).

25. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision regarding the prototype of a new format of the medium-term plan:

> "The General Assembly, recalling its resolutions 47/214 of 23 December 1992 and 48/218 I A of 23 December 1993, decides to authorize the Secretary-General to begin preparation of the proposed medium-term plan for the period after 1997, on the basis of recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its thirty-fourth session and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and taking into account views expressed by Member States in the Fifth Committee, and requests the Secretary-General to submit the new medium-term plan to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session through the Committee for Programme and Coordination."

If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft decision.

26. It was so decided.

27. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded the general debate on agenda item 158. The other issues to be considered under that item would be dealt with together with the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

AGENDA ITEM 119: PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (continued) (A/50/32, A/50/263 and Add.1, A/50/288 and A/50/404)

28. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) said that her delegation was in general agreement with the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/50/32). In the light of the Organization's current financial situation, the overall utilization factor for conference services had assumed greater importance inasmuch as inefficient utilization of resources led to cost increases without corresponding benefits.

29. Her delegation endorsed the request by the Committee on Conferences for expansion of the core sample in the statistical analysis to include the Economic and Social Council and the Committee itself. It was concerned, however, that the sample did not include the Security Council, whose working methods and procedures in some cases impeded the effective and rational use of conference

services. It proposed that the matter should be duly reflected in any resolution adopted by the Fifth Committee.

30. High-quality translation and interpretation were of vital importance for the Organization's work and should be guaranteed through the recruitment of appropriately qualified personnel, with due regard for the maintenance of equitable geographical representation. Her delegation took note of the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 47 of its report, which referred to the international character of the Organization. It supported the statement by the delegation of France concerning multilingualism (A/50/32, annex I) and took note with satisfaction of the Committee's recommendations in paragraphs 88 and 89 of its report.

31. With regard to the control and limitation of documentation, pressure had been exerted on the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session to rule on a matter that lay outside its sphere of competence without even consulting the bodies concerned. Her delegation had taken note of the arguments put forward by those bodies, especially in connection with the need for their continued entitlement to meeting records. It had also taken note of the decision by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to accept unedited transcripts of its sessions, a decision that would be reviewed in due course. At all events, her delegation wished to oppose any tendency to impose such decisions on the bodies concerned without their consent.

32. With regard to the role and functions of the various organs and committees, her delegation deeply regretted the fact that an aspect of agenda item 119 currently before the Fifth Committee had been submitted to the plenary Assembly under the item "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization". In addition, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/220, which biennialized consideration of the pattern of conferences in the interests of more efficient use of resources, had been violated. Although analysis of the control and limitation of documentation had not been scheduled for the current year, her delegation was willing to consider the matter at the appropriate time and in the appropriate forum. In general, however, such practices were inadmissible and called for detailed examination by Member States.

33. The number of bodies requesting exceptions to the rule of biennialization of conferences and meetings had been increasing. The role of individual subsidiary bodies and the existence of solid grounds for the annualization of sessions should be carefully considered when a decision was taken as to whether to grant such exceptions. Her delegation fully agreed with the views expressed in paragraph 57 of the report of the Committee on Conferences.

34. The Secretariat's introduction of new translation and data-processing technology to ensure the more efficient use of resources and personnel should be undertaken in close consultation with Member States and relevant intergovernmental bodies. Her delegation trusted that the proposed programme budget for the next biennium would cover requirements in that area.

35. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that his delegation supported the draft calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/50/32, annex II).

36. His delegation wished to reaffirm the importance of adhering to the principle of the full equality of the six official languages through the meticulous application of all the relevant rules without regard for any extraneous considerations. It was also pleased to be among those States sponsoring the resolution on multilingualism at the United Nations, which affirmed the principle of equality among the different cultures which made up the international community, and hoped that a resolution on the subject would be adopted at the current session by consensus.

37. At the previous session, his delegation had submitted a substantive proposal aimed at enhancing the standard of Arabic at the United Nations (A/49/32, annex II), a proposal which the General Assembly had endorsed. His delegation had taken note of the efforts made by the Arabic Translation Service during the past year as a preliminary towards putting the proposal into effect, but it believed that a greater effort must be made to purify the Arabic language as used at the United Nations of the many alien terms it contained and to free texts from the limitations that prevented the quality of documents from being raised to the desired standards. His delegation accordingly requested the Secretary-General to establish a technical committee to review all terminology and translation practices with a view to implementing the second phase of the Egyptian proposal for the "Arabization" of United Nations documents and texts, which would improve their standard to the point where a reader would not recognize them as translations.

38. His delegation supported the efforts of the Secretariat to profit from new technology in the processing of documents. It also welcomed the increased use of the optical disk system for the storage and retrieval of documents, which contributed to the development of more advanced working methods not only in the Secretariat but also in those diplomatic missions that were linked to the system. However, financial difficulties prevented some developing countries from benefiting from new technology because of its high cost. The use of such technology must therefore not be inadvertently transformed into an instrument of discrimination between Member States.

39. Mr. OWADE (Kenya) said that, despite the Secretariat's efforts to ease the demand for documentation and to reduce wastage, there was still considerable room for improvement. His delegation supported the call for restraint in requests for documentation, which was a matter of collective responsibility.

40. He was gratified to note that advanced technology and better management were beginning to produce significant gains in productivity in respect of documentation, and he looked forward to the outcome of the proposed efficiency study on the printing operation in New York and Geneva.

41. His delegation shared the concerns of other speakers regarding the underutilization of conference services at some United Nations centres and by some subsidiary bodies. There was a need for continuous consultations between the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences and the chairmen of bodies with utilization rates far below the benchmark figure. His delegation also supported the proposal for active dialogue between the Office of Conference and Support Services and the secretariats concerned with a view to correcting the situation.

42. Although his delegation was aware of the wide difference in the scope of the activities undertaken at the United Nations offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, it was concerned at the relatively serious imbalance in capacity utilization, chiefly in terms of the number of meetings held at each location. The existence of centres in different regions should be viewed as an enhancement of the United Nations presence there, and the issue of effective and balanced utilization of United Nations centres should be addressed to alleviate the uneconomical use of the Organization's resources. Meetings could be redistributed from unduly busy to underutilized duty stations. His delegation was consulting others on the possibility of introducing a draft resolution urging governing bodies whose centres were underutilized to ensure effective use of their facilities.

43. With regard to the draft calendar of conferences and meetings of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, his delegation noted with concern that some United Nations offices and headquarters of subsidiary bodies would remain underutilized in the biennium 1996-1997. In particular, the United Nations Office in Nairobi had no meetings planned for 1996. Kenya had therefore offered to host the permanent secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nairobi in order to utilize the expertise and capacity that the United Nations Environment Programme had developed over the years.

44. Mr. VARELA (Chairman of the Committee on Conferences) said that the abiding concern of the Committee on Conferences was to ensure that conference resources were utilized as efficiently and effectively as possible. He was gratified that the members of the Fifth Committee shared its concern about the sizeable volume of documentation and the growing number of meetings, which called for practical and flexible action to ensure both rationalization and continued high quality of services. He was also gratified at the broad support expressed for the Committee's activities and for the conclusions and recommendations set forth in its report.

45. With regard to the new technology to be used as a means of improving productivity and cutting costs, he had taken note of the concern expressed by delegations to ensure full compliance with the principle of equal treatment of the official languages of the United Nations.

46. He assured the members of the Fifth Committee that the dialogue and consultations that were such an essential part of the Committee's work would continue and be reinforced.

47. Mr. RIESCO (Director of Conference Services) said that he had taken careful note of the suggestions made by the members of the Committee and that work had already begun on some of them, such as the dovetailing of short meetings that could be serviced as a block, action to improve the quality of translation, the development of a more accurate cost-accounting system for conference services, the calculation of comparative costs for meetings held at different locations, and the development of various modalities for the provision of services.

48. The Office of Conference and Support Services was highly appreciative of the support and guidance it had received, and would no doubt continue to

receive, from delegations in its efforts to improve the quality and cost-efficiency of conference services.

AGENDA ITEM 115: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/50/L.7/Rev.1 (A/C.5/50/14)

49. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), referring to the statement submitted by the Secretary-General on the financing of the extension of the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador (MINUSAL) (A/C.5/50/14), said, that MINUSAL had been established for a six-month period from 1 May to 31 October 1995, following the end of the mandate of ONUSAL. Financing of MINUSAL for that six-month period had been provided under the resolution on unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. The Secretary-General had committed expenditures in the amount of $1,028,500.

50. In addition to the amount committed under unforeseen and extraordinary expenses, $320,000 had also been made available from a Trust Fund, which had a balance remaining of $70,000. Total expenditure estimated by the Secretary-General for the six months from 1 November 1995 to 30 April 1996 was $1,366,200. Details of the expenses were set out in paragraph 6 of document A/C.5/50/14. Total estimated expenditure was $452,500 for 1995 and $913,700 for 1996. Those estimates would cover, in addition to other costs, the expenses of 10 Professional posts, 1 General Service post and 15 local posts, in addition to 4 civilian police.

51. The report of the Secretary-General and the information given to ACABQ indicated that the proposal for the extension of MINUSAL for the six-month period from 1 November 1995 to April 1996 included a gradual reduction in both its strength and its costs. However, the timing of the reductions in personnel and costs was not fully explained in the Secretary-General's statement. The Advisory Committee was of the view that, as the implementation of various aspects of the peace agreements was completed, the Secretary-General should review the number and level of the posts and the other expenses of the Mission with a view to making appropriate reductions.

52. Taking into account the adjustments he had mentioned, the Advisory Committee believed that additional requirements for 1995 should not exceed $367,400, which took into account the $70,000 balance in the Trust Fund. Such additional appropriations as might be necessary for 1994-1995 should be considered in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 1994-1995, which would be considered by the General Assembly during its current session. For the additional requirements of MINUSAL in 1996, the Committee recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that the adoption of draft resolution A/50/L.7/Rev.1 would entail an additional requirement of up to $886,900 under section 3 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. Such additional appropriation as might be necessary

would be considered by the General Assembly in the context of its approval of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

53. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Fifth Committee should decide to inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/50/L.7/Rev.1, (a) additional requirements not exceeding $367,400 would be required under section 4 of the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995, and that any additional appropriation as might be necessary would be dealt with in the context of the performance report for the biennium 1994-1995; and (b) an additional appropriation in the amount of up to $886,900 would be required under section 3 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 for the period 1 January to 30 April 1996, to be dealt with outside the procedures related to the contingency fund as provided for in paragraph 11 of annex I to General Assembly resolution 41/213, and an additional appropriation of $105,000 would also be required under section 32, Staff assessment, to be offset by income in the same amount under section 1, Income from staff assessment.

54. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) suggested that a reference might be made to the comments of the Chairman of ACABQ.

55. The CHAIPMAN suggested that, in the light of the United States representative's suggestion, the Fifth Committee should decide to inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/50/L.7/Rev.1, (a) additional requirements not exceeding $367,400 would be required under section 4 of the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995, and that any additional appropriations as might be necessary would be dealt with in the context of the performance report for the biennium 1994-1995; and (b) for the additional requirements of MINUSAL in 1996, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommended that the Fifth Committee should inform the General Assembly that the adoption of draft resolution A/50/L.7/Rev.1 entailed an additional requirement of up to $886,900 under section 3 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997; such additional appropriation as might be necessary would be considered by the General Assembly in the context of its approval of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

56. Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand), supported by Ms. BUERGO (Cuba), asked whether a decision needed to be taken at the current meeting, since the documents had just been distributed and almost $1 million was at stake. All statements of programme budget implications should be submitted early enough to allow the Committee to give them due consideration. Greater attention should be given to coordination between the Main Committees and the plenary Assembly.

57. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the reason given for the urgency of the decision was that the mandate of MINUSAL was due to expire on 31 October. Only a few days remained, therefore, for the General Assembly to take a decision.

58. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) said that her delegation wished to make some comments about the draft decision at the next meeting of the Committee. That would still allow enough time for the General Assembly to take action before the expiration of the mandate of MINUCAL.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
12th meeting
held on
Monday, 30 October 1995
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VILCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 115: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/50/L.7/Rev.1 concerning agenda item 45 (continued) (A/50/L.7/Rev.1, A/C.5/50/14)

1. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) sought clarification of the functions of the P-5 (Coordinator) referred to in paragraph 5 of the statement submitted by the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/50/L.7 (A/C.5/50/14). Her delegation was concerned that the proposed functions, particularly that of managing the day-to-day relations of an administrative and logistical nature with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), amounted to an expansion of the Coordinator's role which was not provided for in the original mandate.

2. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Coordinator, whose post was crucial to the success of the Mission of the United Nations in El Salvador (MINUSAL), would not be involved in operational activities. The main functions of the post would be to establish and supervise security arrangements, maintain protocol arrangements with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and oversee the smooth functioning of the office in accordance with the directives of the Representative of the Secretary-General. While the Coordinator would be required to work closely with UNDP on administrative and logistical matters, there would be no duplication of functions.

3. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) said that her delegation was not fully satisfied by the Controller's explanation but would support the draft resolution in view of the urgent need to renew the mandate of the Mission.

4. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the Committee should decide to inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/50/L.7/Rev.1, additional requirements not exceeding $367,400 would be required under section 4 of the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995, and that such additional appropriation as might be necessary would be dealt with in the context of the performance report for the biennium 1994-1995. With regard to the additional requirements of MINUSAL in 1996, the Fifth Committee should further inform the General Assembly that adoption of draft resolution A/50/L.7/Rev.1 would give rise to an additional requirement of up to $886,900 under section 3 of the proposed programme budget for 1996-1997 and that such additional appropriation as might be necessary would be considered by the General Assembly in the context of its approval of the proposed programme budget for 1996-1997.

5. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that her delegation did not object to the draft decision on the understanding that the Committee was proceeding on the basis of the Advisory Committee's report.

6. The CHAIRMAN said that he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt his proposal.

7. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/50/6/Rev.1 (vols. I and II), A/50/7 and A/50/16)

First reading

Section 1. Overall policy-making, direction and coordination

Section 2. Political affairs

Section 3. Peace-keeping operations and special missions

Section 4. Outer space affairs

Section 5. International Court of Justice

Section 6. Legal activities

8. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to begin its detailed consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. At the end of the first reading and after completion of the first rounds of informal consultations aimed at resolving particular points of difficulty, the Committee would put together all the matters and/or amounts approved ad referendum in respect of each section in first reading, together with those approved in respect of revised estimates and programme budget implications, in order to approve in second reading, after recosting, the total programme and appropriation for each section. The package deal resulting from the whole exercise would form the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997. He would take it that the Committee wished to proceed along the lines he proposed.

9. It was so decided.

10. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), presenting the Advisory Committee's recommendations on sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, said that, with regard to section 1 (Overall policy-making, direction and coordination), the Advisory Committee was of the view that the Office of the President of the General Assembly should be provided with adequate resources.

11. With regard to the estimate for the United Nations Board of Auditors, the Advisory Committee had been informed that the estimates received from the Board had been included in proposed programme budgets without change.

12. The Advisory Committee regretted the failure of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to provide it with the information it had requested on the total staff resources available to that Office outside the regular budget. It was essential for all units of the Secretariat to provide the Advisory Committee with all the information it requested. The Advisory Committee recalled that the

General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to ensure that there was no duplication of the work of other Secretariat units and wished to reiterate that point with regard to the work of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

13. Turning to section 2 (Political affairs), the Advisory Committee welcomed recent efforts to streamline the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO). However, further review of the grade structure of DPA was still necessary. The Advisory Committee took note of the creation of two new regional divisions, Africa I and Africa II, in DPKO. In that connection, it requested the Secretary-General to review criteria for the division of responsibilities between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations so as to ensure a clear delineation of tasks between the two Departments and close cooperation in carrying out their mandates. In particular, current arrangements for the staffing of geographical desks in both Departments should be reviewed in order to eliminate overlaps and ensure coordination. Pending the completion of that review, the Advisory Committee recommended against acceptance of the proposal to convert into established posts one P-3 post and four General Service temporary posts under the subprogramme for regional, political and security cooperation.

14. On the subject of the breakdown of posts in regional centres for disarmament, the Advisory Committee intended to examine the issue in the context of its consideration of the Secretary-General's report on the financing of regional centres which was to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

15. As for the proposal to provide $440,000 for the subvention of UNIDIR in the biennium 1996-1997, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the proposed subvention while reiterating its recommendation that every effort should be made to secure unrestricted contributions and to charge a fair share of the Institute's support costs to tied contributions so that the charges to the regular budget could be minimized.

16. As to section 3 (Peace-keeping operations and special missions), the Advisory Committee noted the Secretary-General's request to transfer 19 posts (one D-1, eight P-5, two P-3 and eight General Service posts) from the support account to section 3 of the regular budget and redeployment of a D-1 post from section 2 to section 3. The Advisory Committee had been provided with additional information on the 19 posts and had been informed that the goal was to have 122 posts on the regular budget to be granted over a period of time. It was not necessary at the current stage to take a position on the total number of posts, since the level of future peace-keeping operations could not be predicted and a review must be undertaken of the number of support staff. The Advisory Committee therefore did not recommend at the current stage the transfer of any of the eight General Service posts to the regular budget. Likewise, it did not recommend for conversion the four Professional posts under the Finance Management and Support Service and the Personnel Management and Support Service, since the functions attached to those posts were dependent on the level of peace-keeping operations at any given time.

17. On the issue of the number of military personnel on non-reimbursable loan from Governments to the United Nations, the Advisory Committee would give its

views after it received the report requested from the Secretary-General on the various aspects related to the secondment to the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, at no cost to the United Nations, of military and civilian personnel by a number of Member States.

18. The Advisory Committee welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to streamline the administrative structure and activities of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which had resulted in a net reduction of $8,614,500. Additional savings could be achieved, however, particularly in the area of personnel.

19. He had no comments to add to the Advisory Committee's views on section 4 (Outer space affairs) set out in paragraphs II.36 and II.37 of its first report (A/50/7).

20. The Advisory Committee's recommendations on section 5 (International Court of Justice) were predicated on the assumption that it would be possible to effect savings on telephone calls, travel and common services. In particular, the application of new technology should enhance the Court's capacity to deal with a larger workload and to achieve greater cost-effectiveness. In view of that and of the fact that resources had been requested for further automation of the work of the Court in 1996-1997, the Advisory Committee recommended against acceptance of the request to convert three temporary posts to established status.

21. Finally, with regard to section 6 (Legal activities), the Advisory Committee welcomed the steps that were being taken to introduce modern technology in order to enhance productivity and reduce expenditure on legal activities. Extrabudgetary resources for legal activities were estimated to decrease from $4,819,000 in 1994-1995 to $3,894,100 in 1996-1997. In that connection, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should review the adequacy of reimbursements from extrabudgetary activities as it related to demand.

22. With respect to perceived anomalies in the current practice of paying honoraria, since it was the Assembly that had established the basic principle with regard to the payment of honoraria and, in each case, decided upon the exceptions, it must be for the Assembly alone to decide whether those exceptions must be maintained, increased or abolished.

23. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to consider the six sections of the proposed programme budget section by section.

Section 1. Overall policy-making, direction and coordination

24. Mr. MUÑOZ (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, drew attention to the need to streamline and eliminate overlapping and redundant activities as well as those of little or no value. The duplication of activities within the Organization was a problem that needed to be urgently addressed by the administrative and executive heads of departments, programmes and agencies charged with implementing the mandates defined by Member States. The ability to identify the most effective means of implementing mandates should be one of the

criteria for the selection of programme managers. The European Union was of the view that it was the responsibility of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to take the lead in efforts to achieve that important objective.

25. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) indicated that she wished to raise points applicable to the whole of the programme budget. The United States was disappointed that the proposed budget did not contain any zero-based review of resources and was totally incremental in approach. That concept had been clearly illustrated with regard to the staffing table, and her delegation would like the Committee to adopt an approach that separated out functions from additional human resources. She doubted whether the staffing table represented the total human resources available to the Organization, which was all the more worrying since the staffing table had been one of the fundamental controls which Member States had exercised over human resource allocations in the budget.

26. Her delegation was also concerned that the ratio of General Service to Professional staff remained extraordinarily high and any economy dividends which might have resulted from automation had not materialized. Travel and general temporary assistance needed to be cut back, especially since general temporary assistance had been used for unauthorized purposes in the sphere of overall policy-making, direction and coordination. Moreover, her delegation believed that the use of certain consultants was inconsistent with the financial regulations and it was also concerned about the quality of such consultants.

27. Noting that some programmes were overfunded and others underfunded, she said that her delegation could not determine which were which because it had not received the performance report for 1995. In the absence of such a report, the budget could not be satisfactorily analysed.

28. She indicated that strengthening the budget did not automatically mean allocating additional resources. In that connection her delegation noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General had not recommended any additional resources for the Advisory Committee.

29. Finally, her delegation endorsed the proposal by New Zealand that air travel by spouses of members of the Advisory Committee should not be reimbursed, and called on the Executive Office of the Secretary-General to make available to ACABQ the information requested in paragraph I.7 of that Committee's report (A/50/7).

30. Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of the Australian and Canadian delegations, said that she had reservations about the substantial travel provisions that had been requested for the Advisory Committee and the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). She wondered whether the entire provision of $1,573,000 for travel by ACABQ members would be needed in 1996-1997. The figure had been intended to provide for an extra 10 weeks in the duration of sessions to deal with the Advisory Committee's increased workload owing to peace-keeping activities. However, all the indications were that the number and cost of peace-keeping operations would decline in 1996-1997 and the streamlining of budgetary procedures for dealing with peace-keeping budgets approved in resolution 49/233 would dramatically reduce the number of budgets which ACABQ would have to examine.

31. She also questioned the need for $52,600 for air travel by spouses of members of the Advisory Committee. At a time when the United Nations was under severe financial stress and had clamped down on all official travel by staff, they could see no justification for providing air travel for spouses. She therefore proposed the repeal of the exceptional provisions for spouses' air travel and the deletion of $52,600 from the relevant section of the programme budget.

32. Noting that $788,000 had been requested for travel by CPC members, and given that the Committee's appropriation for travel had been consistently underspent in previous bienniums, she questioned whether the resource growth of $30,000 was justified. She would appreciate additional information on the consistent pattern of underexpenditure by CPC, and believed that the 1996-1997 travel provision should be based on the Committee's actual expenditure for 1994-1995. That information should be provided to the Fifth Committee with a view to considering whether the request for $788,000 was realistic.

33. Mr. KOUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) agreed with the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the total staff resources available to the Executive Office of the Secretary-General should be disclosed together with the source of financing. His delegation was concerned by the ratio of General Service staff to Professional staff in the Executive Office. Such an imbalance was inconsistent with the current productivity requirements of the United Nations and should be corrected in the next budget. His delegation had similar concerns about the request for more posts made by ACABQ.

34. Regarding the increase in resources for the Joint Inspection Unit, his delegation agreed with ACABQ that requirements had shrunk over the previous few years, especially in the peace-keeping sphere. He urged more effective use of resources and greater efforts to ensure that there was no overlapping in the Unit's work.

35. Ms. BUERGO (Cuba) supported the Secretary-General's recommendation for increased resources for the secretariat of the Advisory Committee in view of the latter's increased workload. Similarly, the necessary resources should be guaranteed to ensure that CPC could carry out its work effectively. In order to ensure proper representation in that body, it would be necessary to defray the travel costs of representatives from developing countries, who in many cases had to travel to New York from their respective capitals.

36. Regarding the budget of the Board of Auditors, her delegation would welcome further details on how the Secretariat intended to implement the mandates contained in General Assembly resolution 48/218 B, which had called for external oversight bodies to be strengthened but had not made provision for additional appropriations.

37. Referring to paragraph 1.37 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 (A/50/6/Rev.1), her delegation was concerned at the omission of development questions from the list of issues addressed by the Secretary-General, and, with reference to paragraph 1.45, she asked for more information about advisers and consultants engaged by the Secretary-General as well as

details of the sources of financing of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

38. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that in general his delegation supported the recommendations of ACABQ regarding resources for policy-making organs and noted that the Executive Office of the Secretary-General should set a good example on the issue of rationalizing resources. For the sake of transparency, the information requested of the Executive Office by ACABQ should also be made available to the Fifth Committee.

39. On the question of experts and consultants, it would be helpful to have fuller information on the nature of the expertise and advice offered to the Executive Office by such individuals with a view to taking a fresh look at their role.

40. Mr. TEIRLINCK (Belgium) said that, with reference to paragraph 20 of General Assembly resolution 48/228 I, which provided for the creation of a separate budget section for internal oversight, his delegation would appreciate further information about the Secretary-General's failure to create such a section for external verification in the light of the comments contained in paragraph 14 of the ACABQ report.

41. Referring to paragraph I.34 of the proposed programme budget, he noted that it had been assumed that CPC would meet for six weeks in 1996 and four weeks in 1997, and that a resumed session of the Committee would be required in 1996 in order to consider the outline of the programme budget for 1998-1999. He would appreciate clarification on exactly how long CPC would meet in 1996, and suggested that the wording of the paragraph should be amended to eliminate any ambiguity.

42. Mr. TOYA (Japan) stressed the importance of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General in the field of preventive diplomacy and therefore endorsed the budget allocation for that Office, on condition that streamlining of activities continued. Similarly, in view of the increased profile of external auditing, his delegation supported the budget increase for the Board of Auditors.

43. Regarding the travel and subsistence allowance for members of ACABQ, his delegation required more detailed information, for example on the question of reimbursement of air fares for spouses. With reference to similar allowances for CPC members, he suggested that Member States might wish to defray the travel expenses of their own representatives while guarding against the possibility of creating unfair conditions for representatives from developing countries.

44. Mr. GOKHALE (India) endorsed the comments made by the representative of New Zealand regarding consistent overbudgeting in the case of CPC, and called for more realistic estimates in the future. He agreed with previous delegations that the use of consultants in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General should be drastically curtailed.

45. He reminded the Committee that ACABQ did not set its own workload; it merely responded to the demands placed on it by the Fifth Committee and the

Secretariat. Delegations should proceed from the assumption that the figures provided by ACABQ were provisional and could always be revised. The Fifth Committee should be wary of making drastic cutbacks in the budget of ACABQ and then finding that the Committee had been starved of necessary resources.

46. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that, the necessary resources should be provided for CPC in order to ensure the participation of representatives from developing countries. On the question of the rights of the Palestinian people, the Egyptian delegation requested that resources should continue to be made available until a lasting and just solution to its problems had been found.

47. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Executive Office of the Secretary-General had every intention of streamlining its activities, and to that end an Efficiency Board had been set up to which the Secretary-General had pledged his full support. Regarding the question of travel, he indicated that the Secretariat was entirely governed by the decisions of the General Assembly in that sphere.

48. The past performance of ACABQ and CPC had been studied very carefully in order to avoid overbudgeting, but both committees had consistently overspent, which explained the recommendation for a modest increase in resources. In the case of ACABQ, the Secretariat was also guided by the Committee's own work programme, which was itself determined by decisions of the General Assembly and supplemented by a reasonable estimate of the resources required for peace-keeping operations, for example. In the case of external oversight bodies, the Secretariat had been guided by the operational requirements identified by those bodies themselves.

49. Paragraph 1.37 of the proposed programme budget indicated that the Secretary-General was expected to play an active role in a number of fields. In order to carry out his functions effectively, he required the assistance of a large number of multi-skilled staff. Many of the General Service staff employed in his Executive Office did not simply carry out secretarial duties: they also functioned as record-keepers, research assistants and administrative assistants, and therefore the apparently high ratio of support staff to Professionals was misleading. Regarding the provision for consultants, he explained that in-house expertise was used whenever possible, but in some unusual or exceptional cases it was necessary to seek independent advice, and the budget provision reflected that fact. With reference to the alleged failure to disclose the resources of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, he indicated that all the resources had been accounted for in table 1.15 of the proposed programme budget which also included extrabudgetary resources.

50. Noting that it was physically impossible to produce the second performance report for 1994-1995 before December, he doubted whether the Fifth Committee would be willing to wait until that time to review the budget, and mentioned that such a request had never been made before. On the question raised by the representative of Belgium regarding the creation of a separate budget section for internal oversight, he said that the Secretariat had been aware of the resolution requesting the Secretary-General to formulate proposals on the best structure for the budget. In the case of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, it had been decided that the most suitable arrangement was functional

independence from the Secretariat while remaining the responsibility of the Secretary-General. In the case of other bodies such as the Board of Auditors and CPC, which had a very broad responsibility touching on all areas of the Secretariat's activity, it had not been thought advisable to change their budget structure. However, the Secretariat would welcome any further guidance on modifying the format of the budget.

51. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said, with regard to the Advisory Committee's proposals for meetings, that ACABQ did not formulate a programme of work independently of the needs of the Fifth Committee and the other parties whose resources it examined. Whereas at one time the Advisory Committee had held a maximum of 75 meetings a year, in 1994 it had held almost 300 meetings, and would now be required to meet over a longer period in any given year in view of the timetable adopted by the General Assembly for peace-keeping operations.

52. In addition to responding to the needs of the Fifth Committee, the Advisory Committee also considered the budgets of other operations, some of which were larger than the annual regular budget expenditure of the United Nations. Recently the Advisory Committee had devoted so much time to peace-keeping operations that it had not paid sufficient attention to those other operations and programmes, a situation which must be rectified in the interest of proper scrutiny on behalf of Member States. While there had been overexpenditure on the Advisory Committee's travel, that had arisen simply because the estimates had not fully reflected the Advisory Committee's requirements. He could provide further details in informal consultations.

Section 2. Political affairs

53. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) said that while his delegation supported the estimates under section 2 in view of the importance of political affairs, it was opposed to the emphasis on preventive diplomacy, an area in which no clear mandate had yet been formulated. Further, the section seemed not to contain any resources for implementation of the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism. His delegation would welcome clarification of that omission.

54. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) said that his delegation was concerned at the lack of resources for the disarmament institutes. Indeed, existing resources for those institutes had been used for other purposes, whereas in fact resources should be used only for the purpose for which they had been approved. He noted that resources for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking had more than doubled, but that no justification for the increase had been given. Some of those resources had been taken from anti-apartheid activities. His delegation had hoped that any redeployment would have been to other priority areas for Africa. His delegation was sceptical of the proposed redeployment of resources from the Division for Palestinian Rights in view of the critical stage reached in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

55. Mr. KOUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that there was a need for further review of the grade structure of the Department of Political Affairs, which was still top-heavy. With regard to table 2.13, a substantial amount was provided for consultants and experts, in connection with the development of information technology, and his delegation would welcome further information thereon in the context of the Department's expenditures. Given the negative impact of inadequate staffing on the work of the sanctions committees, and the inability of the Secretariat on occasion to process submissions in a timely manner, his delegation welcomed the proposed strengthening of that area.

56. Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Canada and Australia, said that the three delegations fully supported the Secretary-General's proposal to convert 11 Professional posts from the support account to section 3, and to redeploy one D-1 post from the Department of Political Affairs to the Department of Peace-keeping Operations. She also agreed with the Advisory Committee that the transfer of eight General Service posts from the support account to the Department of Peace-keeping Operations should not be approved in view of the existing ratio of support to Professional staff under the regular budget. Lastly, she endorsed the ACABQ recommendation that the staff and non-staff resources of the United Nations Trust Supervisory Organization should be kept under review.

57. Ms. RUERGO (Cuba) said that her delegation would welcome an explanation of the proposal to eliminate resources for the Office of the Coordinator of Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon. With respect to table 2.5 in the proposed programme budget, she would welcome a breakdown of expenditure by policy-making body. Her delegation supported the maintenance of resources for the Special Committee on decolonization as the principal body in its field. With regard to paragraph 2.11 of the proposed programme budget, she wished to know where the Department of Political Affairs would find the resources to provide the Trusteeship Council with substantive servicing. She agreed that there was overemphasis on preventive diplomacy in the proposals under section 2.

58. In view of the continued relevance of the mandate of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, she could not support the proposed redeployment of two posts to other offices. With respect to the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch, the reference in paragraph 2.74 to the abolition of one P-5 post seemed odd, given the mention in paragraph 2.77 of a provision of $28,600 in connection with a backlog in that office. Lastly, with regard to regional centres for disarmament, her delegation supported the Advisory Committee's comment concerning long-term proposals by the Secretary-General with regard to their financial viability.

59. Mr. BRISEID (Norway) said that in view of the cost-effectiveness of preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping, the Department of Political Affairs should be given the necessary resources. His delegation supported the reallocation of resources from activities concerning Lebanon, apartheid and the Trusteeship Council. At a time when the Organization was coming under increased financial scrutiny, it was important to end redundant activities and focus resources on priority areas. Given the climate of budgetary constraints, Member

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States must be flexible in response to requests by the Secretary-General for resources to carry out tasks in fulfilment of the Charter.

60. Mr. GOKHALE (India) agreed that it would be useful to have organizational charts reflecting the existing situation and the new situation if additional resources for preventive diplomacy and peacemaking were in fact approved. However, it might not be appropriate for the Fifth Committee to take administrative and financial decisions in the absence of political decisions by the General Assembly in that regard. With respect to the regional centres for disarmament, his delegation was particularly concerned that the Director for Kathmandu had not been able to assume his post. He wished to know when funds would be made available to enable him to do so.

61. Mr. MIHAI (Romania) said that his delegation supported the views of the Advisory Committee on section 2, in particular regarding the additional resources needed for Security Council affairs. He supported the comments made by the representative of the Russian Federation concerning the sanctions committees. Lastly, he noted the comments of the Advisory Committee regarding the division of responsibilities between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations.

62. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine) said that the Department of Political Affairs had an important role to play in the discharge of Charter functions. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposals under section 2 and the comments of the Advisory Committee, and, in particular, the strengthening of servicing for the sanctions committees. It was to be hoped that the additional resources would mean the end of delays in processing requests.

63. Mr. HAMID (Sudan) said that his delegation fully supported the views of the Advisory Committee in paragraph II.6 of its report regarding the need for justification of the proposed reduction in the resources of the Division for Palestinian Rights, whose staffing should be maintained.

64. Mr. TOYA (Japan) said that preventive diplomacy and peacemaking had become increasingly important, and the necessary resources should be made available for those purposes. Disarmament, including the regional centres, was also very important, and his delegation would be following closely the situation regarding the Director for Kathmandu.

65. Mr. TOURE (Mali) said that the regional disarmament centres must be given adequate resources to discharge their mandates, that his delegation could not support any reduction in resources for the Division for Palestinian Rights, and that the resources released by the termination of activities in connection with apartheid should be used for other priority areas in Africa.

66. Mr. DIMOV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with remarks by earlier speakers concerning the need to strengthen the Secretariat's capacity to service the sanctions committees. Bulgaria had already had occasion to express its concern regarding backlogs in the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia, and had drawn attention to the need to strengthen the Secretariat units involved in processing applications to that Committee. It therefore

supported the proposals by the Secretary-General to that end and the recommendations by ACABQ in paragraph II.9 of its report.

67. Mr. MONGELLA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation associated itself with the comments by the representatives of Uganda, India, Cuba and other countries regarding the need to maintain and even strengthen the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. That Committee's work was of particular importance in the current context of positive moves towards a settlement of the Palestine question.

68. His country would look favourably on the redeployment of resources released by the elimination of apartheid to other areas of critical concern, in particular, development-related activities in Africa.

69. In view of the acknowledged need to strengthen the regional centres for disarmament, his delegation wondered why the Director for Kathmandu was still languishing in New York.

70. The United Republic of Tanzania agreed with the proposal by India that the preparation of organization charts showing the proposed structure of the Secretariat would considerably help the Committee in its deliberations. In addition, with regard to cooperation between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Secretary-General should review the criteria for the division of responsibilities between those two bodies so as to ensure a clear delineation of their tasks and to avoid the implementation of activities with conflicting mandates and authorities.

71. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Department of Political Affairs had made major efforts to reorganize its operation. To that end, the two parts of the Department had been merged in March 1994 and the current proposed budget presented a far more streamlined version of its operation. Since preventive diplomacy, good offices and peacemaking efforts constituted one of the pillars of the Organization's work, as affirmed in the 1992-1997 medium-term plan, the outline of the budget and the General Assembly resolutions on "An Agenda for Peace", there was a consequent need to strengthen activities in that area. That need had been met by redeploying staff resources available within the Department and by pursuing maximum efficiency gains, without adversely affecting programme delivery.

72. By comparison with the 1994-1995 budget, the proposed programme budget for 1996-1997 showed a reduction of 27 posts in the Department, not all resulting from the elimination of apartheid: some had been achieved through efficiency gains. He believed that, with those resources, the Department would be able to fulfil its mandate.

73. The issue of resources released by the elimination of apartheid had been considered at length by the General Assembly, which had decided to redeploy those resources, to the maximum extent, to programmes benefiting African countries, such as the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (NADAF), the Uganda-based African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the

Treatment of Offenders, the desertification programme and Africa-related activities of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations. The suggestions put forward by speakers regarding redeployment of those resources were, therefore, already being followed.

74. Agreeing that the three regional centres for disarmament in Africa, Latin America and Asia were not operating well, he pointed out that the General Assembly had only approved very limited funding. To be effective, those institutes needed directors, local support, offices and minimum operating funds, and the Assembly had taken the decision that there should be regular budget funding for only one director's post. Unless extrabudgetary funding could be found for the other posts, a physical presence could not be maintained in the countries concerned. The status of extrabudgetary funding was illustrated in table 2.24, from which it was clear that resources were inadequate. The issue was problematic and would be addressed in the forthcoming report by the Secretary-General on support for the regional centres for disarmament, which had been requested by the Advisory Committee.

75. With regard to the need to improve servicing of the sanctions committees, he assured the Committee that the Secretariat was very aware of the importance of those activities and had adopted, over the previous year, several measures to that end. The proposed budget provided for a much firmer basis for the work of those committees.

76. In response to the question whether the Organization should phase out its activities in Lebanon, he drew attention to the report contained in document A/49/388, in which the Secretary-General had confirmed that the United Nations system should continue to play a role in the reconstruction of Lebanon but had pointed out that, in the light of the improved situation in Lebanon, there was no need to maintain the Office of the Coordinator of Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon at its current level and it could be phased out as a separate unit, with the redeployment of its activities to UNDP. Those views had been accepted by the General Assembly without dissent.

77. Where the Trusteeship Council was concerned, the Secretariat had been guided by the relevant General Assembly decisions. With the admission of Palau as a member of the United Nations the Council had, however, completed its mission and no increase in its workload was anticipated: the existing staff requirement was therefore adequate for the Council's needs.

78. The Division for Palestinian Rights was part of the General Assembly Affairs Division and, since the two other subsidiary branches of that Division - the General Assembly Secretariat Services Branch and the General Assembly Subsidiary Organs Secretariat Services Branch - were experiencing a substantial increase in their workload, with the establishment of many open-ended working groups, the Secretariat had proposed the redeployment of two posts from the Division for Palestinian Rights to those bodies as an internal staffing arrangement with no implications for other divisions. He foresaw no difficulty in maintaining adequate services for the Division for Palestinian Rights.

79. Finally, he pointed out that the decision to abolish one P-5 post from the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch and to create support

services for two years in the same Branch was not, in fact, a paradox, as noted by some representatives, since there was no need to maintain the P-5 post any further and temporary special services could be enlisted for the special task of clearing the backlog of applications to the sanctions committees. The proposed arrangement would result in a savings to the Branch, with no loss of performance.

Section 3. Peace-keeping operations and special missions

80. Mr. MUÑOZ (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union supported those proposals aimed at reinforcing the capacity of the Organization in the areas of preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping, especially with regard to the planning and launching of such operations. In particular, the European Union supported the Secretary-General's proposal that 19 posts should be transferred from its support account to section 3 of the regular budget and considered that the reasons advanced by ACABQ for its decision not to support the transfer of eight General Service posts was insufficiently clear. In that context, the European Union believed that the ratio of General Service to Professional staff should be carefully analysed and it was prepared to undertake such an analysis, for which purpose it requested detailed information from the Secretariat on those ratios in all departments.

81. Finally, the European Union was concerned over the absence of any provision in the proposed programme budget for ad hoc or special missions in the field of preventive diplomacy and peace-keeping, particularly in view of the ever-growing importance of those activities and the increasing workload they entailed. The funding of such special missions needed to be put on a more secure basis and all relevant options should be given careful consideration.

82. Mr. KOUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation appreciated the consistent efforts by the Secretary-General to strengthen the capacity of the Secretariat to administer the Organization's peacemaking and peace-keeping activities and it therefore supported his decision to convert 19 posts from support account financing to the regular budget. The Russian Federation also supported the Secretary-General's proposal on transferring eight General Service posts to the regular budget, although it shared some of the concerns expressed by ACABQ regarding the ratio of support to Professional staff. He urged the Secretariat to study carefully the views of delegations relating to that issue.

83. The Russian Federation did not, however, support the Advisory Committee's views regarding the conversion of posts under the Finance Management and Support Service and the Field Administration and Logistic Division, since, as all troop-contributing and equipment-contributing countries could confirm, there was a pressing need to improve the capacity of the Secretariat in those areas.

84. With regard to the issue of internal oversight procedures and the need to systematize the administration of arrangements with contributing countries, the Russian Federation supported the proposals of the Secretary-General aimed at regulating and institutionalizing those procedures and arrangements and it also supported his proposal on the conversion of two P-5 posts from the support account to the regular budget under the Personnel Management and Support Service.

85. With reference in general to budget appropriations for field operations support, his delegation had carefully studied the report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) (A/50/459) and was deeply concerned at its findings, particularly the problems it had identified in the management of resources, the lack of clear functional responsibilities and the absence of adequate asset controls. The conclusions to be drawn from the report were clear: while the Field Administration and Logistics Division was in need of additional resources, the provision of such resources would not in itself solve the problem of efficiency and rationalization of the Organization's logistic operations. His delegation wished to know the Secretariat's view on the problems identified and the remedial measures proposed in the OIOS report.

86. In conclusion, with regard to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) his delegation supported the efforts by the Secretariat to enhance that body's efficiency without affecting its ability to discharge its mandate.

87. Mr. BRISEID (Norway) drew attention to the importance of the backstopping capacity of the Secretariat and, in that context, welcomed the transfer of 26 posts from the support account to the regular budget.

88. The growth of peace-keeping operations had imposed a heavy burden on the Organization and highlighted the need for a highly effective administrative set-up capable of ensuring efficient contacts between Headquarters and field commanders. For that reason, it was essential to consolidate the relevant administrative units and to place funding of the current ad hoc posts for peace-keeping operations in the Secretariat on a permanent basis.

89. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that, in general, her delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation to approve the transfer of posts from the support account to the regular budget, but with two caveats. First, such a measure was ultimately a political decision and a final analysis should be carried out to ensure that the regular budget could absorb its costs, bearing in mind that support-account funding enabled the functions to be performed without burdening the regular budget. Second, the United States was concerned that the objective criteria for the conversion of posts set forth by the Secretary-General were not always met in individual cases, as revealed by the Advisory Committee's report.

90. Finally, the United States would not support the addition of any clerical posts for the performance of secretarial functions, in view of the already high ratio of clerical to Professional posts.

91. Mr. TOURE (Mali) said that the Committee should study carefully the issue of converting 19 posts from the support account to the regular budget. His delegation believed that the financial burden of peace-keeping operations should not be shifted to the regular budget.

92. Ms. RODRIGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that her delegation was deeply concerned that, despite the very divergent views held in the Committee on the Secretary-General's proposal that the basic functions of peace-keeping operations should be financed from the regular budget, the Secretariat had still submitted those

proposals. As it had stated at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Cuba was unable to accept the proposals.

93. With regard to the narrative in section 3 of the proposed programme budget, Cuba sought clarification of the term "power of enforcement" in paragraph 3.6 and wondered what economic and development functions were to be performed by United Nations observer missions. Surely, such functions were more appropriately performed by a development-related office.

94. Finally, her delegation also sought clarification of the division of functions between the Department of Peace-keeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, and stressed the need to avoid duplication, as noted by the Advisory Committee in paragraph II.35 of its report.

95. Mr. GOKHALE (India) said that the stabilization of certain conflict areas and the reduction in the corresponding United Nations peace-keeping missions, such as those in Haiti, Liberia, Rwanda and elsewhere, should be borne in mind. With regard to the establishment of additional posts, India believed that those were justified in some cases but it did not support the manner in which they were to be created. Rather than by conversion from the support account to the regular budget, it favoured the conversion of other regular budget posts, such as those of former anti-apartheid activities.

96. He drew attention to the 95 military personnel on non-reimbursable loan from Governments and suggested that, as that resource was available to the Secretariat at no cost, efforts should be made to utilize it to its full potential.

97. Finally, he reiterated his earlier request for an organization chart reflecting the proposed changes in the Secretariat.

98. Mr. ETUKET (Uganda) requested that the Secretariat provide a specific indication of all posts currently dealing with special missions, indicating those which had been deployed from elsewhere, outside the Department of Peace-keeping Operations. In addition, Uganda requested - as it would again under section 7B - that the Secretariat indicate the status of the D-2 post under the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development currently being utilized under special missions.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTIETH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
13th meeting
held on
Monday, 30 October 1995
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VÍLCHEZ ASHER (Nicaragua)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued) (A/50/6/Rev.1 (Vol. I and II), A/50/7 and A/50/16)

First reading (continued)

Section 3. Peace-keeping operations and special missions

Section 4. Outer space affairs

Section 5. International Court of Justice

Section 6. Legal activities

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Controller to respond to the questions raised and observations made at the previous meeting with regard to section 3 of the proposed programme budget for 1996-1997.

Section 3. Peace-keeping operations and special missions

2. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the General Assembly had been considering the question of the establishment of backstopping posts for peace-keeping operations and special missions for over a year. As part of that process the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the Fifth Committee, had defined backstopping functions, classifying them as "core" or "non-core". While peace-keeping operations might vary in number and size, the consensus was that, generally speaking, such operations would continue for many years. In response to that need, the United Nations should have a permanent infrastructure to ensure the performance of core functions for those operations, functions which should be financed under the regular budget. Backstopping functions that fluctuated with the size and number of operations would continue to be funded from the support account.

3. After determining each core function individually, a comparison had been made between the number of posts needed to perform those functions and the number of posts which were actually being financed under the regular budget. There was a consensus that the Department of Peace-keeping Operations lacked the necessary posts to carry out core functions: just 34 Professional and 28 General Service staff. To fill that gap, it had been proposed to redeploy to the regular budget those posts involving the performance of core functions which were funded from the support account.

4. With reference to the proposal made by some delegations to transfer already abolished posts or those which were to be abolished, he noted that once abolished, a post could not be transferred; posts which had not yet been abolished could be transferred provided that such posts involved functions which were very similar to those being carried out in the context of peace-keeping operations.

5. On the question of the appropriate balance between Professional and General Service staff, he indicated that he could provide more information to those interested, since it was a question which merited careful consideration. Basically, there were too many General Service staff, which was unfair to those providing specialized, non-secretarial services.

6. The budget included only those estimates of expenditure in respect of special missions that corresponded to legislative mandates. Some years earlier, when the Secretary-General had proposed that appropriations should be made to cover unforseen expenditure arising in connection with missions whose legislative mandates would be established ex post facto, the General Assembly had not endorsed the proposal. At the current session the Fifth Committee would be receiving various proposals for financing and revised estimates submitted in connection with legislative mandates. In that context, the Secretary-General would be proposing, at the current session, the strengthening of functions relating to peace-keeping and good offices.

7. With regard to more specific questions, he noted that in paragraph 3.6 of section 3 of the proposed budget, the expression "power of enforcement" referred to resolutions adopted by the Security Council in which it authorized the use of force if such action was needed to safeguard humanitarian assistance activities, in operations such as those in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

8. Concerning the delimitation of functions between the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO), the latter managed the day-to-day functioning of peace-keeping operations, the submission of reports and contacts with missions. The mandate of the Department of Political Affairs was more clearly related to maintenance of the peace, preventive diplomacy and disarmament; nevertheless, its contributions were valuable to the Department of Peace-keeping Operations when it was formulating its final recommendations to the Security Council.

9. With regard to the military personnel provided by Member States for operations, at no cost to the Organization, the Secretariat would be submitting to the General Assembly, at its request, a report on the question. Such personnel did not carry out core functions or occupy supervisory posts in the Department of Peace-keeping Operations, but, rather, provided support for staff carrying out non-core functions in the event of a sudden increase in activity.

10. With respect to the concern expressed regarding the use of regular budget posts for special missions not funded under the regular budget, there seemed to be some misunderstanding since special missions were always financed under the regular budget, or as a contingency in an emergency situation. Special envoys were sometimes funded by means of the temporary transfer of Secretariat officials occupying posts funded under the regular budget. For the purposes of the budget, however, those special envoys were not financed from the appropriation of the department from which they had been transferred.

11. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of section 3 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Section 4: Outer space affairs

12. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee had completed the first reading of section 4 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration and appropriate action.

Section 5: International Court of Justice

13. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) said that he wished to stress the importance of the work of the International Court of Justice, which should be provided with the resources which were necessary to its functioning. His delegation did not support the recommendation of the Advisory Committee to reduce the estimates for telephone calls and travel; in its view, the work of the Court required such resources. Two years earlier, a study had been made of the conditions of work of the Judges of the Court and the possibility of increasing their remuneration, which was fully justified in light of the independence and autonomy which they needed to perform their functions and the increasing complexity of the world situation. His delegation reserved the right to return to the subject at a later time.

14. Mrs. ALMAO (New Zealand), also speaking on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that she was not persuaded that the 5.5 per cent cut in the appropriation for the International Court of Justice recommended by the Advisory Committee was fully justified. In particular, the 22 per cent reduction in funds for long distance telephone calls seemed unduly harsh, especially in view of the fact that in 1994-1995 the Court had had before it 13 cases, an unprecedented number, and that at least that many were scheduled for consideration during the upcoming biennium. She was not convinced that such a drastic reduction in the communications budget was necessary and did not wish to see the performance of the Court adversely affected by any lack of operating funds. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee on that matter should, therefore, be carefully reviewed.

15. Mr. KUZNETSOV (Russian Federation) agreed with the Advisory Committee's recommendations and observations and, in particular, the attention it focused on the possibility of establishing a mechanism whereby the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, which also sat at The Hague, could share the financing of administrative and operational costs. He was also gratified by current negotiations on how the organs could share the use of equipment and the library. He asked the Secretariat to supply his delegation with further information regarding the viability of establishing a joint operational and services structure shared by the Court and the International Tribunal.

16. Regarding the proposal that telephone bills should be reduced, he said that, while recognizing that the nature of the Court's work entailed numerous telephone calls and facsimile messages, he considered that the reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee was very limited; after considering additional information, his delegation would be prepared to request an even larger reduction.

17. Mr. HALBWACHS (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that during the informal consultations statistics would be presented regarding the volume of work justifying the resources proposed by the Secretary-General for general temporary staff. As the representative for New Zealand had indicated, the level of communications expenditure depended on the nature and number of cases dealt with by the Court during a given biennium. Since no reduction was anticipated in the case-load during the present biennium in comparison to the previous biennium, the resources proposed by the Secretary-General were fully justified.

18. Mr. TOYA (Japan) agreed with the opinions expressed by the representative of New Zealand. He was not convinced by the Advisory Committee's recommendations regarding reduction of communications expenditure. For reasons that Japan failed to understand, the Advisory Committee had also rejected the conversion of three General Service temporary posts to established posts and the continuation of four temporary posts. The requests should be considered individually; Japan wished to discuss the issue in greater depth during the informal consultations.

19. Mr. ODAGA-JALOMAYO (Uganda) said that he agreed with the Advisory Committee that sufficient justification did not exist for enlarging the premises of the International Court of Justice.

20. His delegation shared the Russian Federation's interest in the status of negotiations concerning planned joint administrative arrangements between the Court and the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Savings could be made if the two organs shared equipment and library services. In that connection, he agreed that portable computers should be purchased. He shared the Advisory Committee's hope that such equipment would not be underutilized, as appeared to be the case in some peace-keeping operations. He reserved the right to return to the matter at a later date.

Section 6: Legal activities

21. Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand) agreed with the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee that law firms and libraries should pay to receive the Yearbook of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, and urged the Secretariat to fix an appropriate subscription fee.

22. Mrs. BUERGO (Cuba) was concerned by the 6.5 per cent reduction in resources requested for the Office of Legal Affairs, since delivery of the Office's programmes and activities, to which her delegation attributed great importance, might be affected.

23. Regarding subprogramme 1, Overall direction, management and coordination of legal advice and services to the United Nations as a whole, of programme 1, International law, her delegation considered the subprogramme's concentration on the legal aspects of peace-keeping operations and on the political activities of the Organization to be excessive. In addition, she wished to know how the Secretariat proposed to coordinate the Office's international cooperation activities with those of the Department of Peace-keeping Operations in such a way as to avoid duplication. In connection with international cooperation

activities, she requested further information on general legal advice and services, on substantive services for meetings, on the provision of legal advice, studies and analysis on specific legal issues of a public international law nature and, in connection with technical services for meetings on the provision of secretariat services to organs and bodies dealing with subject-matters falling within the competence of the Office of the Legal Counsel, and particularly to the Committee on relations with the Host Country.

24. In connection with subprogramme 5, Progressive harmonization and unification of the law of international trade, she pointed out that the description of activities for promoting legal instruments mentioned "newly independent 'reform States' whose economies are in transition". In the budget, she wished to see greater uniformity in the term used to refer to that group of countries, which the Second Committee had agreed to call "countries with economies in transition".

25. Mr. DJACTA (Algeria) shared the Cuban representative's concern that the reduction in the resources requested for the Office of Legal Affairs might affect implementation of its activities, and he requested that an organizational chart be provided indicating the nationality of all Office personnel in the Professional category.

26. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that, although the total resources requested were lower than for the 1994-1995 biennium, the latter included non-recurrent expenditure which would not be repeated during the 1996-1997 biennium. The elimination of the Division of Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea at Kingston was based on the assumption that the International Seabed Authority would have its own budget. Despite the overall reduction in resources requested, the United Nations Treaty Information System (UNTIS) in the Treaty Section had been enhanced and a post had been added in the General Legal Division.

27. Regarding the relationship between the Office of Legal Affairs and other Secretariat units, he said that the Office provided legal advice on all questions about which it was consulted. Since it was the only unit engaging in such functions, no possibility existed of duplication of activities. A particularly large number of matters requiring legal advice tended to arise in connection with peace-keeping activities, such as agreements regarding the status of forces and contracts with suppliers.

28. Mr. SESME (Burkina Faso) said, on the subject of the Kingston Office, that the International Seabed Authority Council had not yet been established and that therefore it was not possible to speak of a separate budget for that Authority.

29. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that, when the proposed budget had been drawn up, it had been anticipated that the States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea would designate a Secretary-General for the Authority, who would draw up a separate budget for it. However, the States parties had been unable to finalize their work at the meeting in August 1995 and had not made the appointment. Consequently, they had asked the Secretary-General of the United Nations to prepare the budget, which would be submitted at the appropriate time.

30. The CHAIRMAN said that it was his understanding that the Committee had concluded the first reading of section 6 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, and decided to refer it to the informal consultations for further examination and option of appropriate measures.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

31. The CHAIRMAN said that he had received communications from Mr. Mohamed Oummih, President of the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA), and Mr. Wayne R. Dixon, President of the Federation of International Civil Service Associations (FICSA), requesting an opportunity to address the Committee on item 121 of the agenda, "United Nations common system". If there were no objections, in accordance with the practice followed at previous sessions, he would take it that the Committee wished to invite the representatives of CCISUA and FICSA to speak on item 121.

32. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.